

A portrait of Sam Smith, a young man with short brown hair and light stubble, wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket over a red patterned shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a plain, light grey.

Rolling Stone

Issue 1228 >> February 12, 2015
\$4.99

NATIONAL AFFAIRS
**THE GOP'S
NEW WAR
ON OBAMA**

**GRAMMY
TIME!**

Eric Church,
Charli XCX
and Others
Pick the
Winners

**INSIDE A
POLICE FORCE
GONE WILD**

HOZIER

**DYLAN DOES
SINATRA**

**'BETTER
CALL SAUL'**

**SAM
SMITH**

The Lonely
Boy Inside
the Big Voice

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ON THE COVER Sam Smith photographed at ROOT Studios in New York on January 14th, 2015, by **Theo Wenner**.

Styling by Lauren Armes. Grooming by Chechel Joson at Dew Beauty Agency. Jacket and neckerchief by Early Halloween Vintage, jeans by Burberry Brit, sweatshirt by Uniqlo, shoes by Church's.

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VIDEO

FALL OUT BOY: BACK ON TOP OF THE CHARTS

Two years after their last Number One album, Fall Out Boy have roared back with another one: *American Beauty/American Psycho*. They stopped by our New York office to explain why the myth of rock & roll's death has been greatly exaggerated.



Pete Wentz



MOVIES

Cobain

SUNDANCE: THE LOWDOWN

This year's Sundance Film Festival showcased many hotly anticipated films, including *Kurt Cobain: Montage of Heck* and Jack Black's *The D Train*. We have a complete report.



MUSIC

Van Zandt

BRUCE: THE SIDE PROJECTS

From Steve Van Zandt's *Men Without Women* to Southside Johnny's *Hearts of Stone*, we counted down the 12 best albums by Bruce Springsteen's bandmates and associates.



LIST

EXPLORE OUR ARCHIVES

Read full articles from classic issues of ROLLING STONE, dating back to our 1967 launch, with the brand-new Cover Wall experience at RollingStone.com/coverwall.



Iggy Azalea

MUSIC NEWS, AROUND THE CLOCK

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LOVE LETTERS
& ADVICE



Nicki on Top

NICKI MINAJ HAS IT ALL ["Darling Nicki," RS 1226]: beauty, brains and a superior work ethic. Growing up in Queens prepared her for life's realities, but her drive and talent made her able to leap obstacles like a female Napoleon.

*Tammy Faye Gonter
Marietta, GA*

I WASN'T EVEN A LITTLE surprised to read that Nicki now ties Madonna for Top 100 hits by a woman. Unrivaled divas, both of them. Oh, and I've had *The Pinkprint* on "repeat" for weeks, and, yes, it is a classic.

*Gregor Mendoza
Via the Internet*

ISSUE 1226, NICKI MINAJ equals the best cover in, duh, like, forever.

*Dave Synwolt
Kalamazoo, MI*

IT'S ADORABLE THAT NICKI Minaj thinks she's a businesswoman. One note: Businesswomen do not show up two hours late for an appointment, we don't disrespect others, and we absolutely know how to work the hotel Wi-Fi.

Lani Wilson, via the Internet

Criminal Cops

THE LESSONS OF PROHIBITION remain unlearned ["Cocaine Cops of Hidalgo County," RS 1226]. Our failed War on

Say No to War

In RS 1226, contributing editor Tim Dickinson wrote about how marijuana legalization and sentencing reforms now sweeping the country are helping to bring an end to four decades of failed drug policy ["The War on Drugs Is Burning Out"]. ROLLING STONE readers wrote in to comment.

THE SOONER WE CALL this fiasco over with, the better. Legalize drugs, take them out of the hands of criminals and let cops do real work. Stop putting ordinary citizens in jail for engaging in activity that's personal and private. It's called freedom.

Nicko T., via the Internet

TIM DICKINSON'S FINE article on rational marijuana attitudes failed to mention November's Florida medical-marijuana ballot question. More than 57 percent of our voters were in favor (60 percent was needed to pass), and more votes went for pot than to the governor.

*Larry Behnke
High Springs, FL*

KUDOS TO THE POLITICIANS reclassifying simple drug possession as a misdemeanor. That and marijuana ballot initiatives prove Americans are saner than we're given credit for.

Fred Weaver, via the Internet

THE MEGACORPORATIONS that run our prisons won't be happy with this. Expect an

escalation at the federal level with challenges to state laws and a step up in enforcement of federal drug laws. Gotta get that money.

Russ, via the Internet

WHEN MY WIFE WAS diagnosed with cancer in 2013, we read about people using cannabis to treat their cancer. Cannabis is illegal in



Australia, so it was a scary (but successful) journey. We hope Australia will follow America's lead on decriminalization. Lives are being lost to an antiquated stigma.

*Neville Kelly
Queensland, Australia*

Drugs facilitates criminal endeavors and motivates corruption among public officials. Great reporting from RS; pathetic innovation and policy decisions from our local, state and federal governments.

*Carl Czaga
Willoughby Hills, OH*

JONATHAN TREVIÑO ON being a cop: "I enjoyed my job so much. I loved waking up,

going to work, getting busts. Even doing crooked stuff, I was proud." How chilling when cops justify criminality so casually.

Shaun Fitzgerald, via the Internet

Shock Master

MARILYN MANSON IS A bullshitter ["The Vampire of the Hollywood Hills," RS 1226]. As soon as Erik Hede-gaard went home, you know

MM turned on the lights, made some nachos in the microwave and tuned in to *SportsCenter*.

Heather Westenhofer, Orange, CA

Cat Gets Back

ANDY GREENE'S PIECE ON Cat Stevens was well-written and packed with unknown facts ["Yusuf Islam's Golden Years," RS 1226]. Stevens' music was a big part of my youth – it got me writing my own music. Now it's back. And so are some great memories.

Paul Clark, via the Internet

GROWING UP, I LOVED CAT Stevens' music. I was upset when Stevens – by then Yusuf Islam – supported the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie for *The Satanic Verses*. If Stevens/ Islam now wants people to "get over it," why doesn't he publicly apologize to Rushdie?

Marcus Stone, Stowe, VT

MC Banks

HAPPY TO SEE AZEALIA Banks finally coming out on top ["Azealia Banks Is a Free Woman," RS 1226]. Banks' peers achieved success faster because they did whatever the labels said while she stayed true to herself. *Broke With Expensive Taste* was worth the wait.

Nimota Jaji, via the Internet

Punk Royals

ROB SHEFFIELD'S REVIEW OF Sleater-Kinney's record cleared my winter blues ["Sleater-Kinney's Fierce Return," RS 1226]. I'm stoked they're back – and I worship *No Cities to Love*.

Kate Beatty, via the Internet

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THE PLAYLIST

OUR FAVORITE SONGS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW



1. The New Basement Tapes

"Kansas City"

This tune from the all-star 2014 project that built new songs from old, forgotten Dylan lyrics has been getting some love from satellite radio. It's easy to see why: Marcus Mumford delivers a show-stopping lead vocal, and special guest Johnny Depp throws in scorching guitar licks.

4. Sleater-Kinney

"No Anthems"

The mightiest trio in rock take no prisoners on their reunion album, *No Cities to Love*. This standout track hits the hardest of all, building from a slow, seething verse to a guitar-crunching whirlwind of a chorus. It's good to have these three kicking up a racket again like only they can.

6. Tobias Jesso Jr.

"How Could You Babe"

Adele recently called this heart-broken ballad from the much-buzzed-about singer-songwriter "fantastic," and we have to agree. It's a near-perfect slice of instant-vintage vibes, with distinct echoes of mid-Sixties Dylan and early-Seventies Elton John.



2. Björk

"Black Lake"

Björk's brilliant new breakup album, *Vulnicura*, peaks with this devastating 10-minute song suite. It's full of skittering electronics, lush strings and enough raw, pure pain to take your breath away.

3. Frank Ocean

"At Your Best (You Are Love)"

The R&B auteur blessed his fans with this gorgeous falsetto take on the Isley Brothers' 1970s hit, famously covered by Aaliyah in the Nineties. It's not quite a new album, but we're more than happy with it.



5. Lil Wayne

feat. 2 Chainz

"Preach"

Lil Wayne's new album is still stuck in label limbo, but his *Sorry 4 the Wait 2* mixtape has some golden moments to tide us over. Exhibit A, from this punchline-packed standout: "Too much fuckin' talent/Rap Shakespeare, go Hamlet/You other boys could kiss the game goodbye, be romantic."

7. First Aid Kit

"Walk Unafraid"

The Swedish-sister duo's cover of this R.E.M. deep cut finds a rich new feeling in the old melody. Their acoustic version with R.E.M.'s Peter Buck on guitar (find it on YouTube) is even cooler.



EXPERT OPINION



Brian Kelley

of Florida Georgia Line

With his country duo having recently kicked off their latest tour, we asked singer Kelley to tell us what he thinks of five songs.

OLD

The Smiths

"Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now"

It's got this trippy hook going on. Even though the lyric's kind of sad, it puts you in a great mood, and you can turn it up and jam.

Shania Twain

"Man! I Feel Like a Woman!"

I think even I know every single word of this song. It was an incredible play on words at the time.

NEW

Rae Sremmurd

"No Flex Zone"

This sounds like something I would have liked when I was a couple of years younger. I love the way their voices go back and forth.

Ariana Grande

feat. Zedd

"Break Free"

That's a dream-team power couple right there. Big fan of both. It's going to be huge in Europe.

Fall Out Boy

"Centuries"

You'll hear this one on ESPN watching football, and then you'll be laying down in bed and you'll be singing "Centuries, centuries" six hours later.

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Rock & Roll

SOUL MAN

Hozier in
Washington, D.C.



Hozier's Unlikely Rise

Meet the singer behind the smash 'Take Me to Church' By Andy Greene

A LITTLE LESS THAN TWO YEARS ago, Andrew Hozier-Byrne sat down at the piano in his parents' home near Dublin to work on a song called "Take Me to Church." Hozier-Byrne was a struggling musician,

often seen at open mics around town. In front of him was a notebook full of lyrics, some of which expressed his frustration with organized religion – and particularly the Catholic Church's history of mistreating gays and covering up child sexual abuse. "I was just fumbling around and I came upon the idea for a chorus," says the singer-songwriter, 24, who performs as Hozier. "Then I went up into the attic and made a little demo."

Today, the vocals he laid down at that session are the key ingredient in a global smash. "Take Me to Church" would eventually top charts around the world (and hit Number Two in the U.S.), win raves from Taylor Swift and Adele, and earn the previously unknown Irish singer high-profile gigs on *Saturday Night Live* and the *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show*. "I always thought of myself as a very, very obscure artist," [Cont. on 12]



VOICE OF AN ANGEL
Hozier at the Victoria's Secret show

HOZIER

[Cont. from 11] says Hozier. "I never thought Irish radio would be turned on by my music – or any fucking radio station, excuse my French."

A soaring ballad that mashes together blues, gospel, folk and soul, "Take Me to Church" sounds like little else on Top 40 radio in 2015. Hozier credits this to the fact that he grew up in a vastly different environment from most hitmakers. "We lived far out in the Irish countryside," he says. "We had a very, very bad Internet connection." His main source of music was his father, who played drums in blues-rock bands and owned a vast collection of vinyl and cassettes. "I developed a fascination with the roots of African-American music," Hozier says. "I love Muddy Waters and Nina Simone. I also watched *The Blues Brothers* over and over."

Hozier taught himself guitar and sang in his school choir. He was admitted to Dublin's prestigious Trinity College to study music but dropped out, figuring his time would be better spent writing songs. "Take Me to Church" drew on his discomfort with the casual homophobia he witnessed as a kid. "It was just passively accepted," he says. "There was also this misogynist attitude towards women." His rough demo got him a deal with an indie label, which teamed him with producer Rob Kirwan, known for his work on U2's *Zooropa*, *Pop* and *All That You Can't Leave Behind*. Kirwan and the singer spent a few weeks replacing the demo's programmed backbeat with live instrumentation – but Hozier's original vocal on "Take Me to

Church" was so powerful that Kirwan didn't dare touch it. "He's got so much soul in his voice," says the producer.

A small Irish production company created a video for the song, inspired by reports of Russia's repressive anti-gay laws. The stark black-and-white clip, where a gay man is brutally beaten while his lover looks on helplessly, went viral after its September 2013 release (it's now up to 79 million YouTube views). That got the attention of people like Columbia Records A&R exec Justin Eshak, who signed Hozier a month later. "The morning after I heard the song, I hopped on a plane to Dublin," says Eshak.

"You don't want a song to be bigger than yourself, do you?" says Hozier.

In 2014, a tour brought Hozier to America for the first time in his life. Swift caught his set at a club in Nashville, then raved about it on Twitter. "She has more followers than God," says Hozier. "So that was a big deal." "Take Me to Church" kept climbing the U.S. charts, getting a boost when he played *SNL* in October, a few days after his debut album's release. It still hasn't slowed down: Months later, the song remains safely in the Top Five of *Billboard*'s Hot 100 chart.

The singer's calendar is already booked with shows through Christmas, and he doubts he'll have time to make a new album before 2016. "I'm still trying to figure out what's happening," he says. "I think I was incredibly fortunate that the song crossed over." That said, the possibility of "Take Me to Church" becoming too big does weigh on him. "You don't want a song to be bigger than yourself," he says. "I mean, do you? Maybe you do. I don't know. I guess I'll find out."

MUSIC BIZ

HOW THE INDUSTRY LEARNED TO LOVE LEAKS

Rapid responses from Björk and Madonna show a new way to recover from piracy

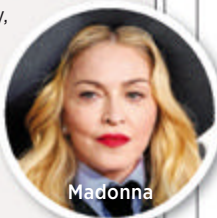
In 2004, when U2's *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb* leaked online two weeks earlier than planned, the band's label scrambled to contain the damage by hastily streaming it on MTV's website. Those weeks are an eternity compared with how Björk and Madonna handled their music's premature arrivals over the past month: After Björk's *Vulnicura* leaked in mid-January, her label rushed it onto iTunes within three days, and Madonna did the same with six *Rebel Heart* tracks after a December leak. "We were running as fast as we could to get the music ready," says Guy Oseary, Madonna's manager. "She had the foresight to say, 'I don't care, I'm putting this out now.'"

In the old days of CDs, warehouses and record stores, album leaks could be far more destructive. In the age of Spotify and iTunes, though, leaks can help build buzz. Madonna called her leak, traced to a suspected hacker in Israel, "deeply devastating," but the *Rebel Heart* tracks sold a solid 146,000 downloads. (Reps for Björk's label, One Little Indian, had no comment.) "Obviously, it's not what you want to happen," says Tom Corson, president of RCA Records, which has dealt with leaks for artists like Kelly Clarkson. "But one of the good byproducts of digital distribution is that, when necessary, you can recover more quickly."

Almost every star has to deal with leaks these days, from Nicki Minaj to Fall Out Boy, whose *American Beauty/American Psycho* recently appeared online before its scheduled release. "It's kind of like if you open the present before Christmas," says FOB co-manager Jonathan Daniel. "But it's less of a big deal than ever."



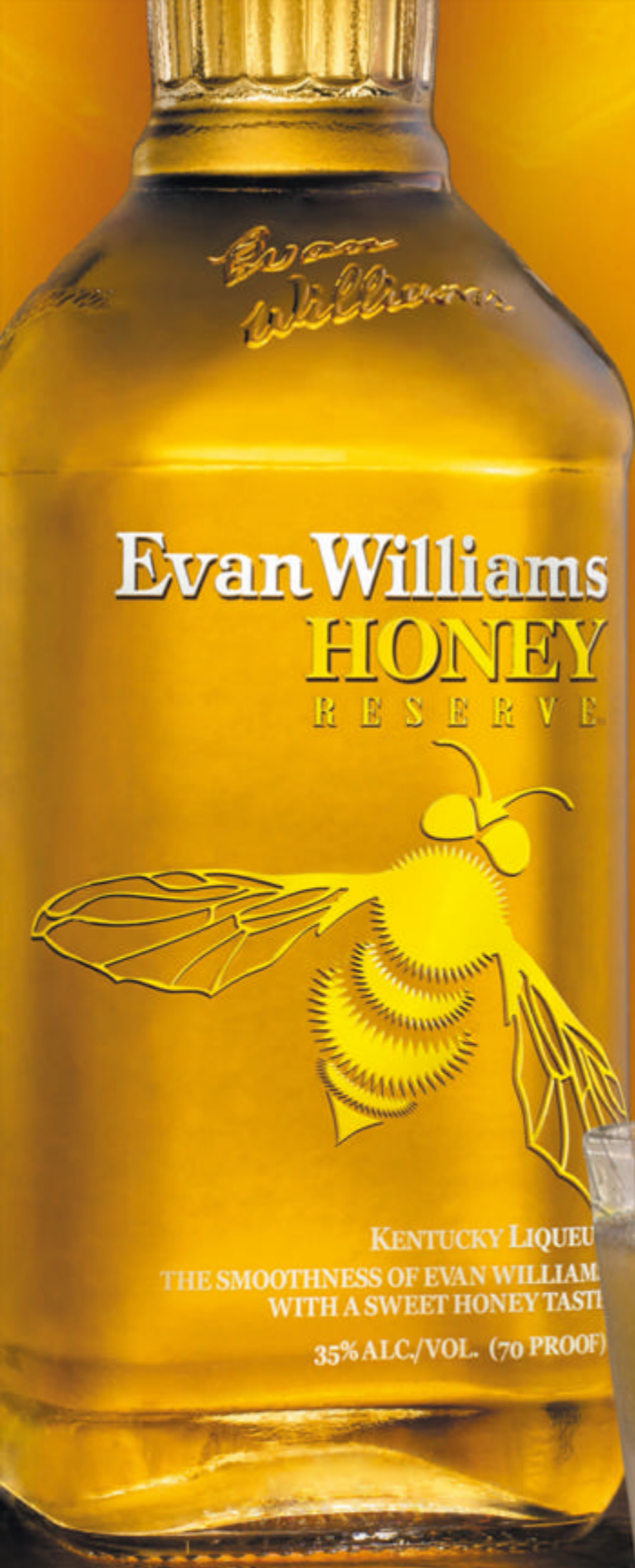
Björk



Madonna

STEVE KNOPPER

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Grammy Showdown: 2015

Is this Iggy Azalea's year, or could Sam Smith pull off a sweep? Who rocked harder, Beck or U2? And we can't count out Taylor, right? Our expert panel of artists predicts the top winners

PANEL OF EXPERTS



Wayne Coyne
The Flaming Lips



Patrick Carney
The Black Keys



Charli XCX
Singer



Eric Church
Singer

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Beck *Morning Phase*

Beyoncé *Beyoncé*

Ed Sheeran *X*

Sam Smith *In the Lonely Hour*

Pharrell Williams *Girl*

THE EXPERTS SAY



Beck

Eric Church

This is an incredibly strong category. I like Ed Sheeran's record, but I'm going to go with Beck's *Morning Phase*, for the mood of it, and the uniqueness and the consistent vibe.

Charli XCX Sam Smith has got this. His record is so universal, and I think he really deserves to be recognized for it – it's so classic, but it's also pop. I love Beyoncé too, though.

Patrick Carney I'm picking Beck. I've been a Beck fan since high school. I probably saw the *Odelay* tour three or four times.

VEGAS ODDS FAVOR

Beyoncé 6-5

WHO SHOULD WIN

A year after Beyoncé's unorthodox release surprised the world, her pop triumph is still blowing our minds.

RECORD OF THE YEAR

Iggy Azalea feat. Charli XCX
"Fancy"

Sam Smith
"Stay With Me (Darkchild Version)"

Sia *"Chandelier"*

Taylor Swift *"Shake It Off"*

Meghan Trainor *"All About That Bass"*

THE EXPERTS SAY

Charli XCX Obviously, it would be cool to win myself, but as a listener, "Chandelier" blew my mind. The melodies she wrote are so intricate. And her voice is incredible.

Patrick Carney Sia, for sure. That's one of the best hooks of the year.

Eric Church "All About That Bass" was a big record, but I can't see anything other than Taylor here. She stands far above the rest. "Shake It Off" is just hooky as hell.

Wayne Coyne I've only heard "Fancy" by accident, but I like it. It doesn't really seem like rap, it's more pop.



Swift

VEGAS ODDS FAVOR

Sam Smith 4-5

WHO SHOULD WIN

This one is Taylor's to lose. "Shake It Off" was 2014's most unforgettable chorus by far. Admit it, you still hum it to yourself once in a while.

BEST NEW ARTIST

Iggy Azalea

Bastille

Brandy Clark

Haim

Sam Smith *Azalea*



THE EXPERTS SAY

Patrick Carney Isn't this award considered a curse? I'm friends with Haim, so maybe I shouldn't pick them. But I'm going to do it anyway.

Eric Church I'm going with Brandy Clark. I'm so stoked that she was nominated, and I hope it sends more people her way – because she's phenomenal.

Wayne Coyne You know what? I'm picking Iggy again. Maybe she'll win all the awards.

Charli XCX I've spent a lot of time with Iggy in the past year, and she's worked really hard. But Haim are just badass. They made an incredible record, and they're three of the coolest people in the music industry.



Clark

VEGAS ODDS FAVOR

Sam Smith 1-5

WHO SHOULD WIN

Sam Smith had the best year of all these artists. *In the Lonely Hour* declared him a powerhouse vocalist with a gift for pop-soul songwriting.



Beyoncé

HILL/GETTY IMAGES; REX USA; RICK DIAMOND/MSB14/GETTY IMAGES; HENRY LAMB/PHOTOWIRE/BEIMAGES; LARRY BUSACCA/PW/WIREIMAGE; GREGORY PACE/BEIMAGES

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL BEZJIAN/WIREIMAGE; TAYLOR EVAN AGOSTINI/INVISION/AP IMAGES; JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES

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BEST ROCK ALBUM

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
Hypnotic Eye

The Black Keys *Turn Blue*

U2 *Songs of Innocence*

Beck
Morning Phase

Ryan Adams
Ryan Adams



Dan Auerbach

THE EXPERTS SAY

Eric Church Well, I already said I think that Beck made the best album of the year. But as far as rock goes, *Turn Blue* was a departure for the Black Keys, so I'd go with them. It's darker and weirder, in a good way. I applaud that. It almost felt like the album was their therapy.

Wayne Coyne If someone's going to stand up there and take the Grammy for Best Rock Album, I'm going to say that it should be Tom Petty. He's cool, he stands for the right things, and he loves music. And his latest album was pretty cool, just like his other records. He's probably already won 20 Grammys, but let's give him another one.

Charli XCX I really like what Beck does. I've listened to his music a lot over the past few years, and I think he makes really amazing, hooky songs.

Bono



VEGAS ODDS FAVOR

The Black Keys 9-5

WHO SHOULD WIN

In a strong category, U2 stand out as the band that most deserves this Grammy after tapping into a rich new vein of inspiration on *Songs of Innocence*.

BEST RAP ALBUM

Iggy Azalea *The New Classic*

Childish Gambino
Because the Internet

Common *Nobody's Smiling*

Eminem *The Marshall Mathers LP 2*

Schoolboy Q *Oxymoron*

Wiz Khalifa *Blacc Hollywood*

THE EXPERTS SAY

Charli XCX I recently listened to the Childish Gambino album on a flight, and I was really into it. He's a great rapper, and his album just has a really cool feel.

Patrick Carney

I dig Schoolboy Q, but I think I'm going to give this one to Wiz Khalifa. I've known him for a few years, and he just got divorced. He's having a hard year.



Khalifa

thought he's a poet. But Iggy Azalea just jumped right off the radio for me. A lot of rap feels like it's become a little bit predictable to me, but her album was refreshing.

Wayne Coyne I like Common, and my friend Miley Cyrus tells me she likes Childish Gambino. But if you're asking me, this one is Schoolboy Q, hands down. He's having fun with it. To me, he seems like he's in the category of "I just want to get fucked up and fuck all the time." Maybe that offends some people, but I just think, "Jesus, people. Let's have some fun, you know?"

VEGAS ODDS FAVOR

Iggy Azalea 2-1

WHO SHOULD WIN

Schoolboy Q's new spin on West Coast gangsta rap was one of the year's best.



Schoolboy Q

BEST POP VOCAL ALBUM

Coldplay *Ghost Stories*

Miley Cyrus *Bangerz*

Ariana Grande
My Everything

Ed Sheeran *X*

Sam Smith
In the Lonely Hour

Katy Perry *Prism*

Grande



THE EXPERTS SAY

Wayne Coyne It has to be Miley Cyrus. I love her – for me, it goes beyond records. The thing she has with her audience is more powerful than music and lyrics. She deserves it.

Cyrus



Charli XCX This wasn't Coldplay's most popular album, maybe, but it really worked for me. There are some beautiful songs on that one. Ariana Grande's voice is also incredible.

Eric Church Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith are both great – we're splittin' hairs here. But I'm gonna go with Ed. Anybody that can stand up there with just a guitar and entertain a big room by himself gets the nod from me.

VEGAS ODDS FAVOR

Sam Smith 6-5

WHO SHOULD WIN

Sam Smith and pop vocals are practically synonymous – no one in this category can compare to his divine falsetto.



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Courtney Barnett: A Wit Is Born

Meet the Aussie songwriter whose upcoming debut is one of 2015's most clever LPs

IN THE FALL OF 2013, COURTNEY Barnett took the biggest trip of her life. The Australian singer-songwriter had just released a collection of witty, charming garage-pop jams called *The Double EP: A Sea of Split Peas*, and she was headed to New York to play a series of shows at the annual CMJ Music Marathon festival. "I'd been over to New Zealand once or twice, but never to the other side of the world," says Barnett, 27, calling from her house in Melbourne. "It was superexciting, but it was also pretty overwhelming. Like, sensory overload! I couldn't sleep at night."

In the months that followed, Barnett's popularity in the States quickly grew, helping her nab choice spots at last year's Coachella and this year's Bonnaroo – and making her proper debut LP, *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit* (due out March 24th), one of 2015's

most anticipated indie releases. One of the best songs on the new album, the moody, yearning "An Illustration of Loneliness (Sleepless in New York)," is about her overscheduled CMJ experience. "I lay awake at three, staring at the ceiling/It's a kind of off-white/Maybe it's a cream," Barnett sings in a sleepy deadpan. "I think I'm hungry/I'm thinking of you, too."

Barnett specializes in spinning seemingly mundane thoughts and events into sneakily hilarious stream-of-consciousness lyrics – sort of like a less cryptic Stephen Malkmus, or Jerry Seinfeld with a fuzz pedal. "I like to write about things that would normally be overlooked," she says. Her best-known song to date, 2013's "Avant Gardener," narrates a lazy afternoon that suddenly turns into a spiraling allergy-slash-panic-attack. Another highlight from her new album, the bright, energetic "Dead Fox," finds her in the middle of the 10-hour drive from Melbourne to Sydney, wondering whether her hay fever is about to cause a fatal collision. "Do you ever sneeze when you drive?" she says now. "I do, all the time. It's scary!"

As chill as she often sounds when she sings, Barnett says anxiety is a big part of her life. "It's something I've always suffered with," she says. "When I wasn't working, I would go kind of crazy. These days there's always something keeping my mind busy."

Barnett grew up an hour outside Sydney in a sunny town by the beach. When she was in her midteens, her family moved to comparatively cold, rainy Hobart, Tasmania. "It was actually great in the end, but I thought my life was being horribly ruined by my parents," she says. "I was so miserable. I remember listening to a lot of Nirvana in my headphones and ignoring my parents on the boat to Tasmania."

At age 20, seeking a more happening cultural scene, she moved to Melbourne, where she's lived ever since. Her goal at the time was to become a professional musician, with no plan B. "I'd been referring to myself as a songwriter since high school," she says. "I just wasn't writing any good songs."

After a few years gigging around Melbourne with bands and on her own, Barnett wrote the first songs she's truly proud of: the ones on her 2012 EP, *I've Got a Friend Called Emily Ferris* (later reissued as half of *The Double EP*). She explains her breakthrough as a question of loosening up. "The determination to write an awesome, perfect song wasn't there, which is what I had been doing up until then: trying to write a song that everyone would like," she says. "When I stepped

"I like to write about things that would normally be overlooked," says Barnett.

away from that need to impress, I wrote a bunch of songs that I liked."

Last year, with the buzz around *The Double EP* continuing to build, Barnett and her three-man backing band – cheekily called the Courtney Barnetts – got to work on her album, recording at a Melbourne studio around the corner from her house. The new LP's soft-loud guitar dynamics echo her teenage love for Nirvana at times, and the inspiration for the album's swirling psychedelic textures came from a less-expected source. "I kept coming back to *A Ghost Is Born*," Barnett says, citing a key experience rocking out to Wilco's 2004 LP on another Sydney-to-Melbourne road trip. "I love how it goes from extreme quietness to excruciating noise."

Barnett took her time finishing the album – "It takes me a long time to make decisions," she says – and completed it last spring. Now she's gearing up to promote it with her highest-profile tour yet, including a run of U.S. shows in the spring and summer. "We like playing loud, and kind of rough," she says of her band. "It's going to be really fun."

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

FOUR SINGER-SONGWRITERS YOU NEED TO KNOW IN 2015



Andrew Combs

Combs moved to Nashville for the same reason everyone does: All his favorite songwriters lived there. The Dallas-raised 28-year-old has

since become an integral part of East Nashville's singer-songwriter community. His upcoming LP, *All These Dreams* (due out this spring), blends Kris Kristofferson-inspired writing with ornate, Roy Orbison-style production. But Combs says he's not about to quit his day job as a songwriter for a Music Row publishing company. "I love writing more than any other element of this career," he says.



Lady Lamb the Beekeeper

"I like to mix reality and moments from dreams to create a world that's half-real, half-imaginary," says Brooklyn's Aly Spaltro.

The 25-year-old's unusual stage name was inspired by a dream – as are many of her gritty folk-rock tunes: Check the lyrics about UFOs on her exuberant debut LP, *After* (due in March).



Jessica Pratt

For her second album, *On Your Own Love Again*, Pratt, 27, went into what she calls a "self-imposed exile," moving from San Francisco to L.A., where she had few friends. While the result is surprisingly self-assured – with Pratt's sweet, high vocals and fluttery finger-picking on display – themes of isolation persist. Says Pratt, "It's like I'm sprinkling pop dust on a sad sack."

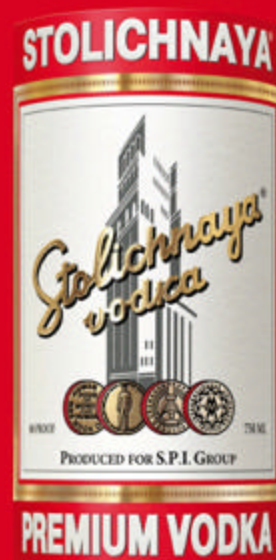


Johanna Warren

"Healing is the central focus of my life," says Warren, 26. That extends from her day job at a medicinal-herb farm in Portland, Oregon, to her new album,

nūmūn (due out this spring), whose softly psychedelic tunes are dedicated to the moon. Adds the singer, "Music is like a magical meditation practice for me."

THE VODKA THAT ALWAYS GETS AN ENCORE.





HAPPINESS IS A WARM GUN
Director Susan Winslow used stock footage from WWII for her film.

HOT REISSUE

Weirdest Rock Flick Ever

Rod Stewart, Elton John, Keith Moon and others cover the Beatles...over WWII footage?!

ONE NIGHT IN THE SEVENTIES, music-biz executive Russ Regan had a strange dream. "I saw Japanese planes flying to Pearl Harbor with 'Here Comes the Sun' playing," he says. "I thought, 'Wow.'" That vision paved the way for one of the oddest rock movies ever, *All This and World War II*, which paired covers of Beatles songs with footage from newsreels and movies: Tina Turner singing "Come Together" to images of Japanese soldiers, Rod Stewart doing "Get Back" to march-

ing Nazi troops, the Bee Gees' "Golden Slumbers" to the bombing of London. "It was sometimes a bit of a reach," admits director Susan Winslow, "but there had to be some connection." The movie – a flop when it was released in 1976 – remains in the can, but its soundtrack (which also includes Fab remakes by Elton John, Keith Moon, Bryan Ferry and more) has just been reissued by Culture Factory USA. "The interpretations are very compelling," says the label's Rory MacPherson. Regan, who's still proud of the project, knows it remains controversial: "At the time, I said, 'There might be a lot of people out there who don't understand what we're doing here,' and I was right. But there will never be anything like it. It's one of the first music videos." **DAVID BROWNE**



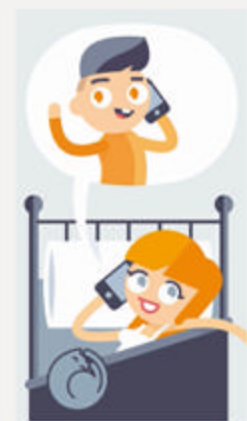
John

HOT APP

WAKE-UP CALL FROM A RANDO

Thanks to a Russian-developed app called Wakie, 2 million users worldwide are getting a quick surprise every morning. The app lets you set the time you want to rise; like clockwork, you receive a phone call from another anonymous user, programmed to typically be someone of the opposite sex. The call lasts only 60 seconds, but some have tried to use it as a hookup tool. "It's the worst dating app," says CEO Hrachik Adjarian. "After one minute, you'll never meet each other again!"

CADY DRELL



RIISING STAR

She's Not Just Another Lena Dunham

How Desiree Akhavan went from Sundance to a role on HBO's 'Girls'

DESIREE AKHAVAN IS tired of being compared to Lena Dunham. "It's flattering – I love Lena's work," says the 30-year-old actress, writer and director. "But there's this subtle implication that there's room for just *one* funny woman whose work can be monetized. And I resent that."

Akhavan's first feature film, *Appropriate Behavior*, debuted at Sundance in 2014 and just hit theaters in limited release. A self-aware romantic comedy, it follows Akhavan's character, Shirin, as she navigates a breakup with her girlfriend while reliving the relationship in flashbacks. It's full of references to Akhavan's Persian heritage, complete with second-generation guilt when Shirin can't bring herself to come out to her relatively liberal parents.



Akhavan

Though her characters spill drinks and get into awkward threesomes, there's a deeper theme of isolation throughout the film. "As I was writing, it seemed to be about somebody who had no home," she says.

Next up: Akhavan has a recurring role on the new season of Dunham's *Girls*, playing a grad student at the University of Iowa. "When I read the script, I knew exactly who that bitch was," she says. "Someone difficult and funny." **CADY DRELL**



REINVENTION

BELLE OF THE BALL
The band (with Jackson and Murdoch, third and fourth from left) in Glasgow

How Dance Music Saved Belle and Sebastian

Inside the Scottish indie-pop vets' surprising turn toward shiny synth grooves on their ninth album

DANCING IN CLUBS ISN'T NECESSARILY the first thing that comes to mind when most people think of Belle and Sebastian, the Scottish masters of wistful melody and wry lyrical asides. So it's a bit of a surprise to hear lead singer Stuart Murdoch, calling from his Glasgow apartment on a rainy winter evening, describe his youth as a string of late-night revels. "I danced all the way through the Eighties and Nineties," says Murdoch, 46.

It wasn't always easy: In the late Eighties, while he was at college, Murdoch was struck by a serious case of chronic fatigue syndrome. He spent the next seven years too weak to finish school or hold down a steady job – but he still hit the local clubs whenever he could. "Even when I was too ill to work, if I had any energy at all, I would head out on a Saturday night on my own and dance," he says. "I'd have to spend the rest of the week recovering. It was kind of stupid."

Now, nearly 20 years after Murdoch's health returned and he co-founded Belle and Sebastian, he's gone back to that early influence. *Girls in Peacetime Want to Dance*, the band's aptly named ninth LP, is full of glittering synths and pulsing backbeats – a sharp left turn from B&S's

usual warm, cozy indie pop. "So many of our older songs were written around a strummed guitar or some piano chords," says Murdoch. "This one is all about the rhythm."

Peacetime is Belle and Sebastian's first album since 2010's *Write About Love* – a project that Murdoch now says he didn't give his full attention, since he was busy writing and directing his years-in-the-making movie musical, *God Help the Girl*. "We made a record," Murdoch says. "But my mind was still on the film, mostly."

A year ago, with the movie done, the band flew to Atlanta to work with producer Ben Allen, whose past collaborations include Animal Collective and CeeLo Green. "We hadn't been together for a while," Murdoch says. "We were thinking, 'Wow, can we still do this?'"

The spark for their new sound came from guitarist Stevie Jackson. "I said, 'I want to make a disco album' – more as a joke," says Jackson, who leads a cover band called Disco Shark in his spare time.

The album that resulted isn't quite *Saturday Night Fever*, but it is Belle and Sebastian's most grooveable set ever, and it's re-energized the band. "I wish we could do another LP right now, but I guess we've got to tour," says the singer. (Their next tour, which hits the U.S. in late March, will feature trippy visual projections of Eighties video games.) "I love pop music more than ever, to a ridiculous degree," Murdoch says. "It saves my life every day."

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

TRIBUTES

Airplane Manager Bill Thompson

Bill Thompson, 70, who managed the Jefferson Airplane through their successes in the late Sixties and Seventies, died of a heart attack in Mill Valley, California, on January 12th. Thompson took the reins from Bill Graham in 1968 and stayed with the group as it split into various new projects in the Seventies and Eighties.

"He was wry, confident, tongue-in-cheek," says Airplane guitarist Jorma Kaukonen. "When he took over, we finally had one of us speaking for us rather than a cog in the establishment record business. I think it gave us the edge that we ultimately had."



Thompson

Kim Fowley, Rock & Roll Impresario

Kim Fowley, who died of cancer on January 15th at age 75, dubbed himself "Lord of Garbage" and left his grimy imprint all over rock.

Among other adventures, he produced the Modern Lovers, wrote songs for Kiss, helped craft a Number One hit (the Hollywood Argyles' "Alley Oop") and managed all-girl punks the Runaways. "He gave me the rap of a lifetime: 'You're going to be one of the biggest stars in the world and play the biggest arenas,'" says guitarist Lita Ford. "Things that happened. He was a great inspiration."

DAVID BROWNE



Fowley

Mark Ronson

On his funk-ed-up hit single, loving Steely Dan, and what music Amy Winehouse would be making if she'd lived By Brian Hiatt

MARK RONSON IS, AT HIS CORE, A DJ and a producer for other artists – he considers his four solo albums side projects. But for his latest, the high-concept *Uptown Special*, he and Bruno Mars have a Number One hit, “Uptown Funk” – a Morris Day and the Time-like throwback that only hints at the album’s diversity, with guests from Tame Impala’s Kevin Parker to Mystikal to Stevie Wonder. Ronson, 39, is pleased with the song’s success, but after its agonizing months-long genesis, he’s even happier just to have finished it. “The thing that I’m really proud of,” he says, “is there were so many times when I would leave the studio and be like, ‘Fuck, man, I guess it wasn’t meant to be.’ But we’d get back together and try and save it.”

There’s a Steely Dan vibe to some of this album, especially in the lyrics novelist Michael Chabon wrote for you. How much did you have that band in mind?

They’re always the gold standard that you shoot for if you’re trying to make lyrics about interesting characters and weird antiheroes. I feel like Steely Dan’s presence has never been more felt in music that’s considered hip and vital – you’ve got the Daft Punk records, and I hear it in stuff like Ariel Pink.

Did you have a second choice for a famous writer? Like, do you think Jonathan Franzen would have killed it?

[Laughs] Michael was the only person I thought of. In my mind, it was an experiment to see if it worked. With a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, it’s like, “When is it OK to ask him if he’s down to rewrite something?” But he was definitely cool with it. I was thinking of records like “Automatic,” by the Pointer Sisters, where it’s a pop-R&B record that has lyrics in the verse like, “All I can manage to push from my lips is a stream of absurdities.” I wanted to inject some turns of phrase every now and then.

This is your third hit with Bruno Mars, after “Locked Out of Heaven” and “Gorilla.” There’s obviously some magic there.

There’s something just spookily great about Bruno. He taps into everybody’s fucking thing – there’s artists that have moments when they’re in the zone, and their music touches everybody. Same way as Michael Jackson. How come toward the end of his career, there were kids screaming outside of his hotel who weren’t even born when his last massive record came out?

How autobiographical is “Leaving Los Feliz,” the song about an aging dude feeling out of place at clubs?

I do go out to clubs in New York and see the friends of my little brother and sister, who are, like, 15 years younger than me, and I basically feel like Uncle Mark. I’m like, “What the hell am I doing here?”

But it’s not like I’m going in there falling-over drunk and trying to pick up 20-year-old girls. As a DJ, I like going out to hear whatever the new dude is spinning. But the song is also about how lonely a giant nightclub can be.

“I Can’t Lose” so specifically evokes Eighties Jam and Lewis. Were you drawing on particular songs they produced?

No, but I really do love that sound of black radio from ’79 to ’84. With “Uptown Funk,” too, everybody’s like, “What song were you referencing?” Nothing! It’s just that when me and Jeff [Bhasker] start jamming with Bruno on the drums, we’re not gonna play, like, Mahler.

What era do you think was the peak of record production?

For hip-hop, I think of *The Chronic*, *Midnight Marauders* and *Fear of a Black Planet* – which are all stylistically different. For pure solid-gold crispness, it’s between ’74 and ’79, when multitrack recording was at its peak and records got expensive: *Off the Wall*, *Aja*, *Songs in the Key of Life*.

What about the sound of pop now?

In the past, people used technology to push music forward, like Nile Rodgers and Duran Duran messing around with vocal sampling, or Bowie and Eno using the first harmonizer to create strange sounds. Now, people use technology to make records faster and easier, to cover up shitty performances. I still record stuff to tape, and take all this time to get performances, because I think that it makes a difference. There’s something in the subconscious brain that knows that’s a living, breathing thing.

Do you ever ponder what Amy Winehouse might be doing musically if she had lived?

She could’ve made a country-blues record, she could’ve gotten into making straight jazz records. I really don’t know. I mean, her heart was always in jazz and those chords. I’m sure, whether it was me producing the record or somebody else, she would’ve ended up pushing somebody to create something new.

On an extremely different note, did you know that the Internet is convinced that you – as a small child – wrote the theme music to the cartoon *ThunderCats*?

I know, that’s such a weird thing! I think someone got in and messed with my Wikipedia page. I was just reading that out loud and I thought it was so funny. I was like, “I’m just gonna leave it.”



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The Rise of a Sleazebag

Bob Odenkirk returns as the gloriously slimy Saul Goodman in a 'Breaking Bad' prequel that's great comedic noir By Rob Sheffield

THE LAST WE SAW OF Saul Goodman, he was buying himself a new life. As *Breaking Bad* headed to the final countdown and Walter White was arming himself for one last battle, his oily lawyer, Saul, was off with a bus

Better Call Saul
Sundays, 10 p.m., AMC

ticket to Nebraska, escaping to the fantasy Plan Z of every two-bit hustler in every American crime story. A new name. A new town. A new identity, giving him a chance to live the rest of his life as a schnook. As he told Walter, "If I'm lucky, a month from now, best-case scenario, I'm managing a Cinnabon in Omaha."

The whole idea of *Better Call Saul* may make you skeptical. As Saul himself might say, faced with a disaster he can't just lie his way out of, this could go a couple of ways: It could be a worthy prequel to *Breaking Bad*, or it could be a pitiful act of desperation, after the demise of a never-to-be-repeated desert-noir classic. Maybe Vince Gilligan and the whole

AMC crew were in denial – like Walter White, they found it too painful to walk away from the life and go manage a Cinnabon.

But after just a few episodes, it's clear that Saul Goodman is a compelling enough slimeball to carry his own backstory. Bob Odenkirk remains a revelation as Saul, so much funnier and darker than he ever hinted on *Mr. Show*. The aura of low-rent sleaze fits him better the older he gets – or maybe it just takes a hambone to play a con artist as smarmy as Saul.

It seems strange in retrospect that Saul didn't arrive on *Breaking Bad* until halfway through Season Two, because he instantly made himself crucial to the dramatic chemistry. Walter White knows from the start this is a small-time Irish grifter posing as a Jewish lawyer. As Saul explained, "My real name's McGill. The Jew thing I just do for the homeboys. They all want a pipe-hitting member of the tribe, so to speak."

On *Better Call Saul*, we get a look at how a cheapjack Albuquerque lawyer named Jimmy McGill invents a new identity and gets tangled up with

the criminal underworld. It's the early 2000s, when Saul is still Jimmy. He's a public defender, psyching himself up in courthouse men's rooms, saying "It's showtime, folks!" into the mirror like Roy Scheider in *All That Jazz*. ("It's from a

movie," he says to annoyed-looking court officers.) He's fueled by vending-machine coffee and cheap despair, driving a beat-up Suzuki Esteem, representing the guiltiest of the guilty. When your defense attorney turns to the jury and begins his statement with "OK, a fire was started – we know that," it's a bad sign.

The tone is nowhere near as bleak as *Breaking Bad* – more like a comic noir. Michael McKean is excellent as his older brother, Chuck, the kind of legit lawyer that Jimmy could never be. And Jonathan Banks makes a welcome return as tough guy Mike Ehrmantraut.

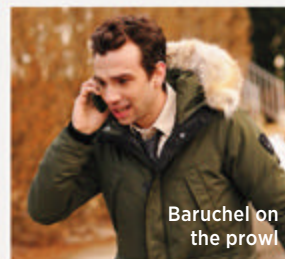
Like Saul, Jimmy tends to talk too much and sweat too hard when cornered. If a client worries about retaining a lawyer – it might make him look guilty – he flashes his greasiest smile and says, "It's getting arrested that makes people look guilty." But he's the kind of lawyer who'd make anyone look dubious. If *Breaking Bad* was the story of an ordinary guy turning into a murderous meth kingpin, this is about an already crooked guy who was always a moral cesspool at heart. We know where Saul's story took him. But the whole point of *Better Call Saul* is that he never had anywhere else to go.

SHORT TAKE

TV's Best New Comedy

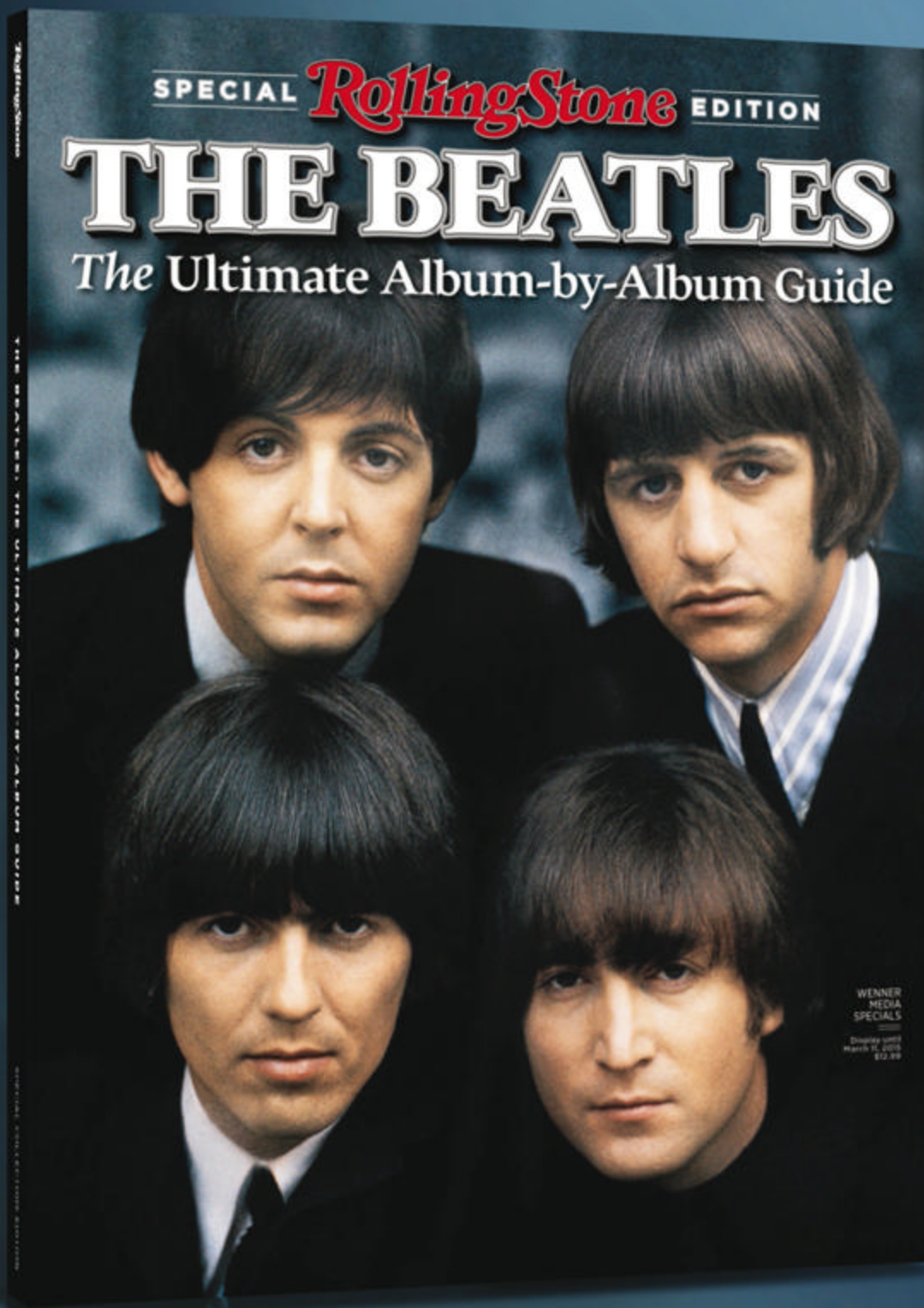
Man Seeking Woman
Wednesdays, 10:30 p.m., FXX

A blind date with a troll. No, a real troll – not the message-board kind, the hideous mythical creature who lives under bridges and harasses goats. That's just one of the nightmare dating scenarios on FXX's outlandishly clever comedy *Man Seeking Woman*, and the punch line is that it's quite possibly better than the leading man deserves. Creator Simon Rich bases it on his short stories in *The Last Girlfriend on Earth*, with Jay Baruchel as his stand-in, a sensitive young nebbish dude looking for romance in Chicago, where it usually takes the form of extended surreal-fantasy skits. His ex's new boyfriend turns out to be Hitler, played by a never-to-be-typecast Bill Hader; a team of military strategists commands the



war room to decipher a completely meaningless text from a woman on the subway. Not all the bits succeed – but even sequences that would seem maddeningly cutesy in some other context work here just because the touch is so light. Baruchel is appealingly dorky, not trying to pass himself off as any kind of catch, just a guy who keeps finding out the thing that's sabotaging him is his own hyperactive imagination.

R.S.



ON NEWSSTANDS NOW

"I don't think I can live in a world where that's even possible." —Noel Gallagher on Ed Sheeran headlining Wembley

Random Notes



Pop Queen Power Walk!

Lorde is taking her time plotting her next album: "I've done a lot of writing lyrically," she says, "but I'm not in any kind of rush." That leaves plenty of room on the calendar to go for a hike in a rustic corner of Beverly Hills with her pal Taylor Swift, whose world tour starts in May. "Lorde is the coolest person I know because she's not trying to be cool, but she is," Swift has said. The feeling is mutual. "I fucking love that record," Lorde tells RS of Swift's 1989. "It's so good!"



SWISS MISTERS
Al Gore and Pharrell Williams met at the Davos conference to announce six Live Earth festival shows in June.



YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND James Taylor joined forces with John Kerry in Paris to express sympathy after the *Charlie Hebdo* attack.



ART CITY ROCKERS The Clash's Mick Jones and Paul Simonon caught up at a London display of Simonon's paintings.



SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW Jimmy Page celebrated his 71st birthday in London with his reported girlfriend, 25-year-old actress Scarlett Sabet.



Grohl's Wild Night

Dave Grohl turned 47 with an epic bash at L.A.'s Forum, where the Foo Fighters backed several all-star guests, including Lemmy, David Lee Roth and Paul Stanley – who stepped up for Kiss' "Do You Love Me." "I thought my 40th birthday party at Medieval Times was cool," says Grohl, "but this one takes the fuckin' cake."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COUSART/JEXIMAGES/WENN.COM; MICHEL EULER/AP IMAGES; GLEN JOHNSON/U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; NOBLE/DRAPER/BAUERGRUFIN.COM; RICHARD YOUNG/STARTRAKSPHOTO.COM



NAILED IT! "This is what happens when you let your grounded daughter pick your toe color," said Nikki Sixx, who's currently on Mötley Crüe's farewell tour.



SUPER SWAG Iggy Azalea and L.A. Laker boyfriend Nick "Swaggy P" Young watched UCLA beat USC. The two recently moved in together. "I have so many shoes that Iggy's started throwing them away," he says.



MAROONED? Adam Levine and his Maroon 5 bros went boating in Puerto Rico with some Victoria's Secret models for a video shoot.

The song Levine sings in *Begin Again* was just nominated for an Oscar.



SELMA REVISITED On MLK weekend, Common and John Legend join *Selma* director Ava DuVernay and stars David Oyelowo and Oprah Winfrey at a march over the same Alabama bridge where King and 500 others were beaten and tear-gassed in 1965. "It makes you realize you haven't really done anything," said Legend.



Back to the Boardwalk

For the 11th time, Bruce Springsteen was the "surprise" guest at Asbury Park's Light of Day benefit for Parkinson's research. Bruce joined old Jersey Shore buddies Southside Johnny (right) and Joe Grushecky for seven *Darkness*-era cuts and covers such as "Higher and Higher." At one point, Bruce took a tequila shot onstage: "If you want to know what the feeling was back in the Seventies in the clubs around here, it's a bit like that," he said.



POLICE SKETCH Sting capped the run of his Broadway musical, *The Last Ship*, by getting a caricature at midtown Manhattan institution Sardi's.

FOR SEASON TWO HE'S CHANGING IT ALL UP.

(Actually, it's basically the same.
Ignore the pony.)

LAST
WEEK
TONIGHTSM
WITH **JOHN OLIVER**

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THE GOP'S HIT SQUAD

Now in control of Congress, Republicans are bent on destroying Obama's legacy. Meet the men who'll be doing the dirty work

★ By Tim Dickinson ★

AFTER WHAT SENATE MAJORITY Leader Mitch McConnell bragged was “a butt-kicking election,” the GOP, which holds its most dominant position in Congress since 1929, has shot out of the gate. In its first week back in session, Congress pushed bills to greenlight the Keystone XL pipeline and to roll back taxpayer protections against Too Big to Fail banks. In one of the first votes whipped by Rep. Steve Scalise, the third-ranking Republican, who has apologized for his past association with white supremacists, the House passed a bill to reverse the president's executive immigration reforms, threatening millions with deportation.

Despite the party's newfound swagger, Republicans remain in a precarious position to actually govern the country. Bold strikes at Barack Obama's legacy initiatives – on health care, finance reform, immigration and the environment – are sure to be turned back by the president's veto pen. At best, Republicans will be able to wreak their damage in smaller doses – tacking toxic “riders” onto must-

pass legislation, or, perhaps, drawing the president into bitter bargains that benefit corporate tax dodgers or erode big entitlement programs like Social Security.

Governing by a thousand cuts can do significant harm to Obama's place in history, and to the federal safety net. But this approach may not satisfy GOP hardliners. “There's going to be a lot of pressure from the House to go big,” says Jim Manley, a former top aide to Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid. “McConnell and John Boehner's whole goal in the next two years is to thread the needle,” Manley adds, balancing the heat of House ambitions against the cold political calculus of the Senate “to get bills that can overcome the filibuster.”

Danger signs are already flashing: The expanded House majority that many pundits expected would give Speaker Boehner room to maneuver around his party's fiery right flank may instead have flamed its insurgency. In January, more than two dozen House Republicans voted to strip Boehner of his gavel – the largest revolt against a sitting speaker since 1860. Boehner held on to power, but his con-

trol of his conference is in question. “That vote was the tip of the iceberg of Tea Party sentiment,” insists Rep. Chris Van Hollen, the ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee. “In terms of intensity, the House remains dominated by the Tea Party wing of the Republican Party.”

The GOP has embarked on a treacherous transition from the “Party of No” to the party of “Oh, Yes, We Can.” And its power players are shifting. Their ranks include committee chairs exercising their authority to reshape foreign policy, banking regulations and the tax code. Others are leaders by force of ideology, men who have galvanized the party around noxious ideas on immigration, global climate change or drug policy. They even include deal makers from the other side of the aisle, Democrats who seem more loyal to power than to the president.

Moving forward, the actions of eight individuals will determine whether the Republican majority can string together meaningful policy victories – or simply oversee the next round of political dysfunction in the Capitol.

CUTTING CORPORATE TAXES

Rep. Paul Ryan Wisconsin



SINCE THE RISE OF the Tea Party, Wisconsin congressman Paul Ryan's policy proposals are one of the few things capable of unifying fractious Republicans. Apart from show votes to repeal Obamacare, the Ryan Budget – which would turn Medicare into a voucher program, eviscerate Medicaid for the poor and slash discretionary spending to less than half of Reagan-era levels – has been the one piece of legislation that could reliably clear the House.

The Ways and Means Committee is the chief tax-writing committee in the House, and Ryan is so juiced about his new post as chairman that he has already bowed out of a 2016 campaign for the White House. His ultimate goal is “comprehensive” tax reform – a full rewrite of the tax code, cutting tax rates for both individuals and businesses. For now, the gulf between Republicans and Democrats on individual rates is unbridgeable. So “full-throttle tax reform,” as Ryan calls it, is off the table.

But Ryan, Senate Leader McConnell and even President Obama have voiced enthusiasm for rewriting the corporate-tax code. Corporate-tax reform has legs because it offers both Democrats and Republicans a chance to reward their parties' patrons – without tweaking parts of the tax code that hit voters in the pocketbook.

The gist of business-tax reform is to reduce the 35 percent tax rate by at least 10 percentage points, and then to offer multinationals the chance to bring home billions in offshore profits – paying a trivial tax rate in the single digits. Under Republican proposals, this “tax holiday” would, effectively, be made permanent.

Democrats and Republicans have stipulated that tax reform must be “revenue-neutral.” But Republicans are notorious for accounting tricks that appear to balance the books during the 10-year term scored by the Congressional Budget Office – before producing hundreds of billions in deficits in later years.

Ryan – a skilled salesman with a gift for cloaking radical change under the guise of steady centrism – is setting the stage for audacious giveaways. He is insisting that the CBO adopt a new method, known as “dynamic scoring,” for measuring the cost of tax legislation. Derided by many economists as magical thinking, dynamic scoring would make tax cuts appear to be less costly by factoring in projected economic growth resulting from the cuts. “With dynamic scoring,” says a top House Democratic aide, “they're trying to make it look like tax cuts for the wealthy don't cost money.” That's not an exaggeration. In 2001, the Heritage Foundation used the method to argue that the Bush tax cuts would grow the economy fast enough to retire the national debt by 2010. (When Bush left office, the U.S. was more than \$10 trillion in debt.)

SLASHING ENTITLEMENTS

Rep. Tom Price Georgia



RIISING TO REPLACE Ryan on the House Budget Committee – and setting his sights on Social Security – is Georgia Rep. Tom Price. A former orthopedic surgeon who represents the suburbs of Atlanta, Price is one of the most conservative men in Washington – the “embodiment” of the Tea Party, says one Democratic staffer: “He's someone who's always willing to appeal to the worst elements in society.”

Price regularly expresses contempt for the president. In 2010, when the White House was negotiating with BP to create a \$20 billion account to pay out damage claims from the Gulf oil spill, Price denounced Obama for his “Chicago-style shakedown politics.” But Price is, ironically, one of the few GOP congressional leaders who might actually be in a position to strike a deal with the White House. In Obama's 2014 budget, the president proposed slicing benefits to future retirees by lowering Social Security's annual cost-of-living adjustment. “The president has shown his willingness to make substantial concessions,” said Robert Greenstein of the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

If Price is serious about moving the needle on policy, and not just posturing for right-wing activists, he's now got the power to erode the Democrats' dearest entitlement program. Concessions would be required, of course. But Price may be the one GOP leader with sufficient Tea Party clout to frame that bargain with Obama as something other than a weak-kneed, centrist sellout.

KILLING WALL ST. REFORMS

Rep. Jeb Hensarling Texas



REP. JEB HENSARLING, whose district includes wealthy suburbs stretching east from Dallas, may be the most powerful congressman you've never heard of. As chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, he'll be the GOP's point man destroying the legislation Democrats passed to prevent a repeat of the 2008 crash. “Republicans are going to do their best to drive a stake through the heart of Dodd-Frank,” says the House aide. “He's their leader on this.”

THREAT ASSESSMENT THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



WITH US

Tina and Amy kill it at Golden Globes.

Colts expose **Ballgazi**.

Study: **Rooftop solar** now cheaper than conventional power in many cities.

Two Americans climb El Capitan's Dawn Wall.

Chevy promises 200-mile range for cheap electric Bolt.

JPMorgan Chase CEO **Jamie Dimon** hissy fit – calls regulators unpatriotic.

Dalai Lama: “I am Marxist.”

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP IMAGES; MELINA MARA/WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES; NICK TOMEK/NORTHWEST FLORIDA DAILY NEWS/AP IMAGES; NO CREDIT; MATTHEW ALEXANDRE/AP/GETTY IMAGES; PARKED BROTHERS; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; CAROLYN KASTER/AP IMAGES; BOB D'AMICO/ABC/GETTY IMAGES; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; NO CREDIT; JAN MARTIN WILL/SHUTTERSTOCK

A free-market fundamentalist, Hensarling has a far-right base. He formerly chaired the Republican Study Committee – then the most conservative caucus in Congress. And his quiet power is reflected in frequent scuttlebutt that he's a top candidate for speaker – whenever Boehner either steps down or is brought down.

Despite an establishment-Republican bloodline – he cut his teeth as an aide to Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas), who dismantled the Depression-era banking safeguards known as Glass-Steagall – Hensarling enjoys deep clout with the Tea Party for having bucked Boehner's leadership to stall passage of the September 2008 TARP bank bailout.

As his power has grown, however, Hensarling has emerged as a Wall Street darling. The top contributors to his 2014 re-election were JPMorgan and Goldman

House, postponing enactment of the Volcker Rule, which would restrict speculation by Wall Street. Hensarling asked his countrymen to consider the "suffering" of American banks, adding, "The left aims their rhetoric at Wall Street, but they vote against Main Street and hardworking American families."

REPEALING 'OBAMNESTY'

Rep. Steve King Iowa



REP. STEVE KING, AN Iowa Tea Partier, should not be a man of congressional consequence. His official responsibilities are limited to seats on a smattering of subcommittees, including livestock and rural development. But King has transformed

House, although it would have passed easily with Democratic support.

The GOP's first salvo on immigration reflected King's hardcore ideology. The House advanced a Homeland Security funding bill with two amendments blocking Obama's executive actions on immigration – including not only Obama's recent executive amnesty, but also an earlier Obama initiative to save from deportation young Americans brought to this country without papers.

Why would the mainstream GOP, which needs to make inroads with Hispanic voters, treat King with anything but contempt? The congressman, who represents the northwest corner of Iowa, is a kingmaker with activists in the state that hosts the first-in-the-nation presidential caucuses. Leveraging this clout, King can summon even moderate presidential hopefuls to kiss his ring. His January "Iowa Freedom Summit" drew speaking commitments from 2016 hopefuls including current and former governors Scott Walker, Chris Christie, Rick Perry and Mike Huckabee, as well as Sen. Ted Cruz, Tea Party darling Ben Carson and even long-shot former Hewlett-Packard exec Carly Fiorina.

RECRIMINALIZING POT

Rep. Andy Harris Maryland



SINCE THE GOP SEIZED the House in 2010, Congress has legislated by crisis – pressing up against potentially catastrophic deadlines, before jamming through ugly megadeals in the dark of night. The clearest way for the GOP to sidestep an Obama veto and advance its agenda is for legislators to tack riders onto such must-pass legislation. Riders can be used strategically to advance broad party goals. Or, as Maryland Rep. Andy Harris proved

IN ITS FIRST WEEK BACK IN SESSION, CONGRESS BACKED BILLS TO GREENLIGHT THE XL PIPELINE AND TO ROLL BACK TAXPAYER PROTECTIONS.

Sachs, and during his career he's taken more than \$2 million in banking-industry cash.

Hensarling's hallmark is not overreach, but persistence. His strategy is clear: Keep pushing deregulation, confident that pieces of the GOP's pro-Wall Street agenda will get through – as happened with December's must-pass appropriations bill. The bill included a rider, authored by Citigroup lobbyists, permitting big banks to again gamble on derivatives with taxpayer-insured deposits.

To open the new Congress, Hensarling steered a similar bill through the

himself into the GOP's power broker in the immigration debate – ringleader of a caucus of between 50 and 70 House members who, he says, will "fight to the last drop of blood" to prevent America from normalizing its undocumented immigrants – or, as King calls them, "deportables."

"Steve King is the leader on immigration," says the Democratic aide. "He doesn't have that by rank or by title, but by the force of his ideas." In the last Congress, King's anti-immigrant gang struck such fear into Boehner that he refused to bring the Senate's immigration bill, passed by a whopping 68 votes, up for a vote in the

Huckabee slams Beyoncé as "mental poison."

Elizabeth Warren rules out presidential bid.

U.S. VIPs a no-show in Charlie Hebdo Paris march.

271 out of 533 Congress members now millionaires.

GOP ex-Rep. **Joe Walsh** calls for more American journalists to be beheaded.

The **all-white** Oscars.

U.S. military **social media** hacked.

Study: **Sea levels** rising much faster than we thought.

AGAINST US

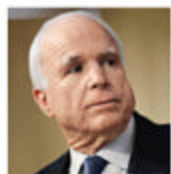
with last December's "Cromnibus" bill, they can shove one man's ideology down American throats.

Harris, Maryland's lone Republican representative, acts like a one-man vice squad. As a state legislator, he once tried to defund the University of Maryland after students scheduled a showing of an X-rated movie. ("Pornography isn't fun," he said. "It's evil.") With his seat on the influential House Appropriations Committee, Harris single-handedly attempted to overturn the will of Washington, D.C., voters, 65 percent of whom had endorsed a November ballot initiative to legalize marijuana. Just before Christmas, Harris attached a rider to the massive spending bill, blocking the district from "enacting" new measures to liberalize marijuana law, claiming that noncriminal weed would "create legal chaos" in the district.

Ironically, that's exactly what Harris' rider has engendered. D.C.'s new attorney general believes that the district can carry out legalization (which he argues was already "enacted" by voters). And the district is now playing chicken with Congress. In January, the city council took steps to push legalization forward – daring Congress to file a lawsuit based on the Harris rider.

FIGHTING ENDLESS WARS

Sen. John McCain Arizona



WHILE MUCH OF THE GOP now runs away from the neocon interventionism of the Bush years, the party has, ironically, put back into power a man desperate to confront global hot spots with American military might. Sen. John McCain has been slotted into one of the most powerful chairmanships in the Senate, heading up the Armed Services Committee. McCain's chairmanship could cost American taxpayers dearly. The senator is vowing to roll back the budget constraints of "sequestration" at the Pentagon – ending austerity in the only place it ever made sense.

McCain is also committed to reviving the interventionist wing of the Republican Party by ratcheting up pressure on Obama to undertake more bellicose responses to ISIS, Russian aggression and the nuclear ambitions of Iran. McCain can't overrule the president's decisions as commander in chief, of course. But he can position himself as a back-seat driver of U.S. foreign policy – for example, by calling hearings with hawkish generals who will insist that Obama's strategy to defeat ISIS cannot succeed without boots on the ground, or that Vladimir Putin's incursions must be met, not only by tough sanctions, but also by arming Ukrainians to the teeth.

KILLING CLIMATE REGULATION

Sen. James Inhofe Oklahoma



GLOBAL WARMING IS shaping up, perhaps, as the biggest battle of the next two years. President Obama is determined to secure a legacy of action on climate

change, while the Republican Party, beholden to Big Oil, is determined to reverse any forward progress. On this issue, there's no reasonable compromise to be brokered – it's a zero-sum game.

The new Environment and Public Works Committee chairman, Oklahoma Republican James Mountain Inhofe, literally wrote the book on climate denial – his 2012 tome is titled *The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future*. Inhofe believes that climate science is a scam, designed to cheat humanity out of the fossil fuels endowed by God above.

BY TACKLING TOXIC RIDERS ONTO MUST-PASS LEGISLATION, THE REPUBLICAN PARTY CAN SHOVE ITS IDEOLOGY DOWN AMERICAN THROATS.

As committee chairman, he will badger, interrogate and even subpoena Obama officials in an effort to derail the administration's many pending environmental regulations – including rules to curb downwind power-plant pollution, regulate mercury and methane emissions, slash smog-producing ozone and, of course, the EPA's proposed new limits on carbon emissions from power plants.

But Inhofe is more than a formidable attack dog. He also has leverage over the White House. With oversight of Public Works, Inhofe holds the keys to massive infrastructure investments like the highway bill. And the senator knows how to cut a deal. Even though tax hikes are verboten in the GOP, Inhofe has signaled that he could be persuaded to hike the gas tax – inventively rebranded as a "user fee" – that funds highway improvements. But he'll extract a price. Inhofe will likely force the White House, desperate for job-creating, economy-stimulating infrastructure projects in advance of the 2016 election, to eat a few riders that strip away at environmental protection. Indeed, Inhofe has a history of such legislative shenanigans, once using a highway rider to block federal environmental oversight of American Indian lands in Oklahoma.

SCREWING THE DEMOCRATS

Sen. Joe Manchin West Virginia



WEST VIRGINIA SEN. Joe Manchin may still have a D by his name, but after Republicans seized power in the Senate, Manchin bragged he wouldn't

walk in "lockstep" with Democrats and sounded happy to build McConnell's governing majority: On "legislation which I think will really help the country, and benefit my state," he has said, "I'm going to be right there with them."

Out of the gates in January, Manchin stood as the top Democratic co-sponsor of the bill to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. Manchin even bragged that he would help lead an override of Obama's threatened veto of the tar-sands pipeline – "we could have 67, 70, 75 votes." Manchin is not a climate denier – he just governs like one. As a senator from West Virginia,

Manchin has a deep parochial interest in coal. He's also accepted more than \$1 million in campaign cash from mining interests and electric utilities. He joked recently that the EPA and the IRS are "about the same" – and blasted the Obama White House's environmental "overreach."

Manchin also seems eager to abet GOP efforts to pare back Obamacare. He's one of two Democrats who signed on to legislation that would allow employers to refuse health care coverage to nearly-full-time employees – those working between 30 and 40 hours a week.

What's Manchin's motivation? After the wipeout of red-state Democrats in the last election, Manchin may be plotting another run for governor of West Virginia, a job he held from 2005 to 2010. An alternate explanation is that Manchin – who has bemoaned his Senate tenure as the least productive time in his life – has been seduced by the notion that a centrist bloc in the Senate can wield exceptional power and put points on the board. "It's a once-every-four-years idea – that a moderate gang is going to seize control of the Senate agenda," says Manley, the former Senate-leadership aide. "It never works out," he insists. "In the end, a moderate on Capitol Hill is just roadkill."

by **indica**



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THE LIBERATION *of* SAM SMITH

He went from London barback to pop's king of pain. Now he can finally smile **By Patrick Doyle**

HE'S HARD TO MISS: A BROAD SIX FEET three, wearing a plush, navy Armani overcoat and trademark silver cross earrings, leaving a faint trail of Bleu de Chanel, which lingers on you if he gives you a hug. "My grandma wore Chanel No. 5 my whole life," he says. "I chose Chanel because of her." It's a clear evening three days before Christmas, and Sam Smith is turning heads in London's posh Knightsbridge neighborhood. He walks a few feet behind his bodyguard, a tall, no-nonsense bearded guy named Adi, as they proceed down the picturesque Motcomb Street on the way to Smith's hair stylist. "This is my dream street," he says. "The houses are

Photograph by **Theo Wenner**



amazing, everything's clean, very Dickensian. Maybe I'll be able to afford one by Album Four."

As we turn onto a busy commercial street buzzing with last-minute shoppers, Smith gets recognized more. "Are you him?" a man in a suit asks, holding up his iPhone; Smith gives a half nod and shakes his hand. A minute later, a young father approaches: "I know it's cheesy, but it's Christmas – can my son have a picture?" Smith agrees and poses with the bundled-up little boy, before Adi moves things along.

This is one of the few times Smith, 22, has walked around London since becoming, perhaps, the biggest new pop star in the world. "Three months ago, I could walk down here no problem," he says. He stops at the corner of Harrods, the

the courage to hit the gay bars alone. He wrote about the loneliness of that time in "Stay With Me," a gospel-steeped confession about the aftermath of empty sex. "I had a lot of one-night stands," Smith says. "I met a few dodgy friends, people I'm definitely not friends with now." Around the same time, Smith fell in love with a married man. Several of the songs on Smith's debut album, *In the Lonely Hour* – such as "I've Told You Now," about the time he drunkenly spilled his heart to a guy who he thought was leading him on – detail that heartbreak. "I fell in love with a straight guy last year, and he didn't love me back," says Smith. "I got trapped in my own mind."

Lonely Hour has become a Top 10 hit around the world, selling more

Jimmy Napes. "But Sam's is so ridiculously high that it's impossible to reach. What most sing in falsetto, he can sing in his chest voice, and with power. He's a very, very rare talent."

AN HOUR LATER, SMITH emerges from the salon, his coif only slightly shorter. We head back to his dream street, taking a seat at a bar outside under purple, glowing snowflakes, and he orders a lager. Napes, a cheerful 30-year-old in a leather jacket, stops by. He can't stay long; his wife is due to give birth soon. Napes has asked Smith to be the child's godfather, which Smith is taking very seriously. "I'm going to upset so many people with that christening," says Smith.

"Even if there's a show, I'm gonna cancel it. I'm going to make the baby gay."

"I'm going to strap

Smith calls Adele "my Michael Jackson,"

but bristles at the comparisons: "It annoys me that

people can't digest two pop stars who don't look like normal pop stars."

four-and-a-half-acre luxury department store that he has been coming to during the holidays since he was a kid. The exterior is lit up like the Golden Nugget, blanketed with Christmas lights and several over-the-top windowfront displays – a robotic Santa Claus with flying reindeer, futuristic nutcrackers. "Isn't that amazing?" he says, taking it in for a moment.

"Not as amazing as your voice!" interjects a middle-aged man in a knit hat who has been eavesdropping. Smith chuckles; as we begin to cross the street, the man adds, "I hear you're putting Adele out of business!"

Smith has been hearing a lot of this lately. He starts walking faster, letting out a nervous laugh: "Did you hear what he said?" Since he broke through last year with the spare anthem "Stay With Me," he's been tagged as the male Adele. It's easy to see why – they're both Brits with great voices who sing about heartbreak and don't look like they were engineered in a Disney lab. Smith calls Adele "my Michael Jackson" – he's been a fan since he was 16 – but says, "We're very different, and I feel like the constant comparisons might piss her off." He adds, "It just annoys me that people can't digest two pop stars singing really personal songs who don't look like normal pop stars."

Just a couple of years ago, Smith was working a few miles away as a barback in the city's financial district, eating customers' leftover fish and chips for dinner. On off nights, he says, he'd sometimes sit at home drinking a bottle of wine to work up

than 3.5 million copies. This February, he's up for six Grammys, including Best New Artist and Album of the Year. Less than three weeks from today, Smith begins his first arena tour, with sold-out shows from Minnesota to Madison Square Garden.

He's entered a world he used to dream about as a theater kid growing up in the English countryside. He texts Rihanna. ("I fucking love her.") He sang next to Bono, Seal and Chris Martin at Bob Geldof's recent Band Aid charity session. ("That was surreal...and Seal is so buff.") He was invited to Taylor Swift's 25th birthday party ("She let me hold her Grammy"), where he traded Paris restaurant recommendations with Jay Z and Beyoncé. Tonight, he's a little stressed because he hasn't responded yet to an Elton John e-mail.

Swift, an early fan, remembers inviting Smith onstage at London's O2 Arena early last year. "I'll never forget the moment I was standing onstage at soundcheck waiting for Sam to walk out, and my band and I heard him sing into his mic from the side of the stage in our in-ear monitors," she says. "Everyone just stopped what they were doing and looked at me like, 'Wait a second.' We were all completely stunned that this person sounded even better live than he did on his recordings."

Beyoncé recently told him his voice is "like butter." "Everyone has a breaking point in their voice, which is where it goes from being your chest voice to your falsetto," says Smith's writing partner

him to my chest and take him to G-A-Y," Napes jokes.

"That's a gay bar," says Smith. Adds Napes, "If it wasn't obvious."

Soon, more members of Smith's circle start showing up, including his three managers, his 19-year-old sister, Lily, and his roommate Tiffany, a stylish brunette he's known since he was five. Smith and Tiffany have lived together for four years, recently upgrading to an East London apartment, overlooking the Thames, where he likes to take long baths and listen to Lana Del Rey. They don't see each other nearly as much as they used to, like when they'd come back from work, eat chicken wings and watch *Lost*, or the time they dressed up in funny hats to watch the royal wedding on a giant screen in Hyde Park. "We downed a bottle of red wine at five in the morning and were nearly puking," Smith says. "For the majority of the wedding, we were asleep."

Smith and his sister are planning to get tattoos on Christmas Eve with their other sibling, 18-year-old Mabel: a Roman numeral three on their wrists to signify their bond. (Their dad wants one too. "We said no. That kind of ruins it," says Lily. Smith nods.)

Soon, everyone heads into sleek black vans to go to one of London's best Indian restaurants, Gymkhana, in Mayfair, for an unofficial celebration of Smith's big year. "This is like the Last Supper," Smith says, posing for a mock-serious photo as he settles into the center of the table in the private room. He orders an "Ooty Town Gimlet," a very sweet, ginger-and-liqueur drink with rose petals on top – which six others order after he does. He also orders red

Associate editor PATRICK DOYLE wrote about Jerry Lee Lewis in November.

wine all around. As Dixieland jazz plays, waiters bring dishes off the seven-course menu like quail shish kebabs and wild-boar vindaloo.

When Smith goes out on the town, he goes all-out. (Tonight, we'll run up a bill so high his label rep will complain, "I'm so over my budget. I'm going to get hammered for this.") His iPhone cover-screen photo features an image of him next to a stripper's ass. In June, on the night *Lonely Hour* was released in the U.S., he celebrated with rounds of martinis and tequila, and ended up "flapping around like a fish" on his hotel-room floor while his friends poured Fiji Water on him. "If you watch me on *Letterman* the next day, it looks like a hanging," he says.

Swift remembers sitting with Smith at the American Music Awards in November. "We were front row watching Ariana Grande, loving her performance," she says. "We're both really animated when we're watching other artists. At the end, she did some dance move that was so sexy and so cool, and at the same time, Sam and I both screamed out, 'Yas, bitch, yas!' and then looked at each other and died laughing. I had this feeling that we'll be friends for life."

Smith has a lot of plans for his U.S. tour. In Orlando, he says at dinner, he wants to see the Wizarding World of Harry Potter; in Atlanta, he wants to visit Magic City, the famous strip club. ("I actually feel bad for strippers because I'm a bit feminist - I just want to put a jacket on them," he says. "But you can't take things like that too seriously.") They currently have a club named the Skylark booked for the Madison Square Garden afterparty, but he's having second thoughts. "The Boom Boom Room is just so fun. And it's gay! That's where Beyoncé and Solange had the fight. Should we do that, maybe? Let's do that." (They end up sticking with the Skylark.) And he doesn't want to leave Vegas without seeing some pop divas. "It's called the triple threat. You go see Cher, you go see Celine Dion, then you go see Britney."

"Britney's show is so bad," says a member of the group. "It's really depressing."

Smith doesn't care: "*Blackout*, that's my favorite Britney album. There's still some

of her there. She was fighting for something. Whatever it was, she was fighting for something. I also love *Circus*. I always say to myself, 'If Britney can make it through 2007, you can make it through this.'"

Soon, conversation turns to the Grammys. He went last year, and was bored for most of it. "But during Beyoncé, I was los-

don. The family took lots of vacations: trips to Abu Dhabi to visit his mother's friends, as well as Spain and Italy. ("I used to love Tuscany as a kid so much," Smith says.) His dad, a part-time personal trainer, stayed home to raise the kids. "I've had such a feminine influence in my life," Smith tells me the next day. "My mom and

my sisters are very strong women. My best friends are all girls. I think I've got a bit more woman in me."

When Smith was nine, his parents bought him a secondhand amp and a mic. While his dad cooked dinner, Sam would sit on the living room sofa, singing hits by John Legend, Norah Jones, Britney and Beyoncé over backing tracks. Sometimes, when his parents hosted dinner parties, at the end of the night they'd call on Sam to perform. "My mom and dad would have a bit to drink and be like, 'Sing a song!'" he says. "But every time I explain that, it sounds

like they were pushy - they weren't." By then, he was in vocal training with a professional jazz singer and getting acting roles like the lead in a children's version of *The Rocky Horror Show*. ("It was talk of the town," says his roommate Tiffany.)

Sam's parents found a theater coach who helped him graduate to London's West End, where he sang at children's showcases

and in the chorus of musicals like *South Pacific*. "It was my first taste of everything, being in a dressing room, having people say, 'Well done,'" he says. "I was really addicted to that feeling."

Around the age of 13, a schoolmate asked him if he was gay. "I turned 'round, and I was just like, 'Yeah,'" says Smith. "And everything changed." Smith says his classmates were generally accepting, and his childhood was happy roughly "80 percent of the time." As a young teen, he wrote a "really intense" love letter to a popular, artistic kid two grades above him. The student turned out to be straight, but he wrote a long, thoughtful letter back, saying he only saw Smith as a friend. "It makes me emotional, actually," Smith says, his eyes clouding up. "He looked out for me for the rest of school. He just made sure that if anyone took



The Voice

Above: In London, September. Right: With Lorde, Karlie Kloss, Swift and Jessie J (from left) at the '14 AMAs. "There is something pure about him," says Swift.



ing my shit," he says. Smith is "100 percent" sure he'll lose Album of the Year to her this year. His managers balk. "I don't think anyone would call that a proper album," one says.

"She deserves it way more than I do," says Smith, who's been known to sing "Drunk in Love" in the shower and knows all the moves from the video. "I'd be embarrassed if I got it over her. If I got it, I'd give it to her."

SMITH GREW UP IN A COZY, 400-year-old pink house with a swimming pool in Great Chishill, a tiny village near Cambridge. His mother was a trader for Tullett Prebon, a major brokerage firm listed on the London Stock Exchange. He notes with pride that his great-aunts were some of the first female bankers in Lon-

the piss out of me, he would stick up for me. He could have made it hell for me, you know?"

Some did make it hell for him. Once, he borrowed another student's eraser and watched the kid wash it off afterward. "He was like, 'I don't want to share my eraser with a gay man,'" Smith says. He pauses for a moment. "Prick. I hope he's reading this." Another time, as he was walking through town with his dad, someone drove by and yelled "faggot." "I was just embarrassed that my dad had to see that, because I could only imagine how you feel as a parent. You just want to kill them. I was always embarrassed for the people around me. It never actually deeply affected me. You just ignore it, you know?" Ironically, the worst incident happened after he moved out of his small hometown: Soon after arriving in London, he was attacked while walking around in makeup. "I got punched in my neck, just out of nowhere," Smith says. "It wasn't the easiest."

Smith was a devoted Lady Gaga fan. When he was 17, he faked a note to his teachers, saying he was sick so he could get in line for Gaga's Monster Ball at the O2 Arena. "I was front row, fully Gaga'd up!" he says. Unfortunately, he left the fake note open on a school computer and ended up with three days of detention and big trouble at home. "I'd do it again in a heartbeat," he says. "Without Gaga, I wouldn't be here right now." Today, Gaga says that knowing she inspired Smith is "one of the most powerful experiences I've had as an artist. I was Sam. I still am Sam in a lot of ways."

Smith came out publicly in an interview last summer. It's perhaps a sign of progress that the announcement was met with little fanfare. Smith's matter-of-fact approach to his sexuality has received some criticism from within the gay community, however: In August, Gawker published an essay titled SAM SMITH'S FUCKED-UP GAY CONSERVATISM, where the author took issue with several of Smith's statements, including his criticism of dating apps like Grindr and Tinder, and quotes like, "I had to be careful [coming out] - I want my music to be sung by absolutely everyone." "[Smith's] philosophy is, in short, to be gay, but not *too* gay," said the writer.

"There was no depth to those comments at all," says Smith. "I'm a romantic. I feel like with Grindr and Tinder, you just lose a bit of romance. You're swiping someone's face to the left. The guys I've

fallen in love with aren't the most beautiful people you've ever seen. I would've swiped them.

"I don't know what I'm trying to do, but I am trying to do something, you know?" he adds. "I'm trying to change something for the gay community. I've always said this: I want to be a singer. I don't want to have to be a *gay* singer, because I am a gay singer, do you know what I mean? Do you speak about being straight every single day of your life?"



Samland

Top: With younger sisters Lily (left) and Mabel. Right: With former flame Jonathan Zeizel, a dancer, last year.



Smith's family life began to fray in his teens. In late 2008, when he was 16, his mother lost her job. Shortly thereafter, a *Daily Mail* piece appeared with the headline CITY BANKER IS 'SACKED FOR SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME ON SON'S POP DREAM.' The article reported allegations that his mother, Kate Cassidy, lost her £500,000-per-year job for "gross misconduct" because she used the company's "time and resources" to promote her son's career. "It is not true, 100 percent," Smith says. His mother disputed her dismissal in court. "My mom still gets upset about that now. She gets really upset about it, because it affects her finding work."

Not long after, things got worse when the entire family took a weeklong vacation to New York. On the first day, they were walking under the Brooklyn Bridge when one of his sisters started crying; she had just seen her father texting another woman. That day, their parents told them

they were getting divorced. "We had no choice but to go for walks through Central Park and talk about it," Smith says. "My sisters would cry. I would cry. We all dealt with it suddenly."

He's planning to include a song about the split on his next album. The day after our dinner, during a break at a video shoot, he plays me some of it on his iPhone. "I haven't played this for anybody," he says. "It's just an insight to how personal I'm going to go with the second record." The ballad is called "Scars," a letter to his parents. He holds the phone to my ear:

This is for my mother, from the older brother of your children, me.

Glad you found your lover, 'cause it wasn't our father who made you laugh and happy.

It's been a long five years, I've cried 1,000 tears, and here we are after the war.

But we're so much better now, the skies are clearer now.

"Do you like it?" he asks, turning it off after the first chorus. "It's very deep. I've only played it for my family. They cried every single time I played it."

The day before, Smith had called the divorce "the loveliest split-up of all time." But today, he says, "I said that to convince myself.

That's what I did from Day One, you know? We pretend like we're OK, but it did affect us."

At 18, Smith moved to London and started working at the financial-district bar. He recorded a now-prophetic song called "Little Sailor" ("Willing to do anything if I write a hit song/And I'll ride this tide/I'll put some makeup on"), which he sent to Elvin Smith, a singer he'd seen open for Adele. The song never took off, but Elvin became Smith's manager and arranged for Sam to write with Napes, a songwriting buddy with few credits. "It sounded like the voice of an angel on this recording," says Napes. "And it was even better in the room. I couldn't believe it." Together they wrote "Lay Me Down," the real-life story about the death of an acquaintance's grandfather; his widow had a heart attack at his funeral and died within days. It wound up in the hands of the dance-pop duo Disclosure. "We assumed it was a girl,

because of how high his voice was," says Disclosure's Howard Lawrence. They recruited Smith to sing "Latch," an upbeat, unconventional rave-up with jazz chords. Smith was working in the bar the day it started getting radio airplay. "We both tuned in and listened to it play on the radio for the first time on the phone together," says Lawrence. The song entered the U.K. charts in October 2012 and spent months in the Top 40. "It took off in a way that we never, ever could've expected," he says.

Most of *In the Lonely Hour* was recorded in two weeks, roughly one song a day, in a converted Victorian school in upscale St. John's Wood – the same studio where Adele happened to record her debut album. (Smith also worked with two of Adele's co-writers, Eg White and Fraser T. Smith.)

thinking how unique it was to have such a visceral reaction to a modern artist."

BACKSTAGE AT ATLANTA'S Fox Theatre, Smith's luggage sits open in the middle of the room, under a rumpled dress shirt, near a snack table stocked with Cheez-Its and Special K. "I hate when things are messy," says Andrea, his cheerful personal assistant, picking up a candy wrapper and placing it in the trash while Smith does vocal exercises in the bathroom. Soon, Smith is looking over his relatively modest new tour wardrobe: five identical black button-down shirts with white collars he describes as "quite priest-y." There's also a lone all-white shirt. "I look a little too Michael

we shouldn't have done that, because there's sharks.")

Smith downplays his relationship with Zeisel. "I've allowed someone to stay in my bed more than, like, three times, which is the first time that's happened in a long time." (A couple of weeks later, a label representative says that the two are no longer together.)

At soundcheck the next day, Smith looks nervous. He paces the stage in a gray T-shirt and hoodie, his cheeks a little red, tapping his index finger on his mic repeatedly. He asks that the house lights be dimmed, and he looks irritated when it takes a couple of minutes. There is a false start to "Like I Can," and then the band forgets the new intro to "La La La." "You haven't done that yet?" Smith asks them testily. A crew member at the soundboard assures Smith that they have, and it's cued up.

"I want to be a singer," he says.

"I don't want to have to be a gay singer, do you know

what I mean? Do you have to speak about being straight every day of your life?"

One day at Napes' basement studio during a writing session, he and Sam were out of ideas. They went out for pizza with songwriting partner William Phillips and ended up having a frank conversation about Smith's sex life. "I was really taken aback," says Napes. "He was like, 'Let's just go there,' and then we did." The three wrote "Stay With Me," recording it just a few hours later, laying down simple drum, piano and organ tracks.

Napes recalls ordering Smith to stand in various parts of the studio at different distances from the microphone, singing the chorus' harmonies over and over. "I had him running around, and he basically created a choir out of his own voice," says Napes. "When we pushed play and all those vocals came in in the chorus, that's when we all knew this was magical. I've never experienced anything like that before. It was just such a moment."

The label tried to take the song "down other avenues, sending it to many, many people," Napes says. "But we just kept coming back to that same day. We'd always say, 'Let's try to beat the demo.' And what ended up being on the record was the demo."

Smith's U.S. breakthrough came in March, when he scored a *Saturday Night Live* booking – a rare feat for a relative unknown. "When I watched his performance on *SNL*, I knew how powerful his gift was," says Lady Gaga. "I was with my boyfriend, about to leave for tour again the next day, and Sam was singing 'Stay With Me.' We both had such an honest emotional reaction. I remember

Bublé in this one," he says.

The tour starts tomorrow, and Smith had only a week to rehearse before the holidays. "I'm scared shitless, actually," he says. "I'm doing an arena tour, basically, with one album. And it's only 35 minutes long!" He's filling out the show by extending some songs, adding songs from his earlier EP and a cover of "My Funny Valentine."

He tells a member of the crew to make sure no one goes out drinking. "I want everyone on the ball," Smith says. No Magic City tonight. The night before, his team opted for an early bar-food dinner that sabotaged his current cayenne-pepper-juice regimen. "It wasn't great, actually," he says. "I just want to lose weight for the Grammys, if I'm honest." Smith just returned from an Australian vacation, where photographers caught him shirtless on the beach. "That fucking shot, I dreaded it," he says. "I'm just very body-conscious. Sometimes I'm really proud that I don't look like other pop stars. But there's also moments where I'm like, 'Ugh, I wish I had abs like Bieber.'"

For most of the vacation, he was joined by Jonathan Zeisel, a dancer Smith met on the set of his "Like I Can" video late last year. "He's amazing. A really kind guy, and he's very talented. He's the most amazing dancer. He's just very sweet." On the trip, they stayed with local pop star Ricki-Lee, went dancing until six in the morning, and went skinny-dipping. ("Afterward, we were like, 'Maybe

Smith retreats backstage for a two-hour nap and catches up on a couple of episodes of *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*. When we speak in his dressing room, he's fretting about the crowd. "It's seated, so I really hope they stand up," he says.

They do, from the moment Smith hits the stage, backlit, from behind a screen. Swift had it right: Unlike so many pop singers who strain to sound like their records in concert, Smith's voice seems bigger, almost cruelly effortless. The audience, a mix of selfie-taking girls and dressed-up couples on date night, seems to know every song. They swoon at the end of "My Funny Valentine," when Smith holds a rich a cappella note for what seems like forever. Before "I've Told You Now," he tells the story of the night he got drunk and confessed his feelings to his straight crush. "Has anyone ever been in love with someone who doesn't love them back?" he asks, and the crowd roars. The room goes silent when he performs "Lay Me Down" over only a piano. Afterward, the entire audience stands, cheering, for more than a minute. He steps back to take it in for a while, smiling.

A half-hour later, between two meet-and-greets, Smith takes a seat in a hard chair on a tile floor. "That was incredible," he says. "I'm a bit relieved. It felt more powerful. Last year, we left our shows going, 'Do you like it?' But we left tonight going, 'You *have* to have liked that.'"

Smith pauses for a few seconds, remembering that last moment onstage. "I literally thought in my head, 'I am really happy. Yeah, I am really happy right now.'"

WHEN COPS BREAK BAD

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, POLICE IN ALBUQUERQUE HAVE SHOT AND KILLED 28 PEOPLE AND BRUTALIZED MANY OTHERS. INSIDE A DEPARTMENT GONE WILD

BY NICK PINTO

ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK CONCEPCIÓN







LOOKING WEST FROM THE SCRUB AND BOULDERS OF the Sandia Mountains, the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, sprawls across the valley of the Rio Grande, surrounded by the vast openness of the high desert. On the city's eastern edge, the winding roads and cul-de-sacs of tony subdivisions in the Northeast Heights abruptly give way to the foothills of the mountains, whose sharp red peaks tower over the city. ¶ On the afternoon of March 16th, 2014, Albuquerque police received a 911 call from this part of town, a man complaining that someone was illegally camping in the foothills. Two Albuquerque officers responded and, sure enough, encountered James Matthew Boyd, a 38-year-old homeless man who suffered from schizophrenia. Boyd was clearly not well, ranting, telling police that he was an agent for the Defense Department.

Unauthorized camping is a petty misdemeanor. The officers could have told Boyd to move along and left it at that. But as Officer John McDaniel approached, Boyd wouldn't show his hands and McDaniel drew his gun. When the officers moved to pat him down, Boyd pulled out two small knives; the cops stepped back and called for backup, setting off a spectacular circus, with as many as 40 police officers reportedly joining the standoff. Among them were uniformed cops and members of the SWAT team, the tactical K-9 unit and the Repeat Offender Project squad.

Not present, Boyd's family would later allege in a complaint, was anyone clearly in charge. Keeping Boyd surrounded, often with guns drawn, officers tried to get him to surrender his knives. Finally, after three hours, Boyd prepared to come down from the hills. "Don't worry about safety," he told the police. "I'm not a fucking murderer." But as Boyd packed his stuff, both hands full of possessions, Detective Keith Sandy—who hours before, on arriving at the scene, boasted on tape that he was going to shoot "this fucking lunatic" with a Taser shotgun—tossed a flash-bang grenade, a nonlethal weapon designed to disorient and distract. Another officer fired a Taser at Boyd, and a third released a police dog on him. Boyd drew his knives again. Advancing on him, officers ordered Boyd to get down on the ground. Boyd began to turn away, and Detective Sandy of the ROP squad and Officer Dominique Perez of the SWAT team each fired three live rounds at him, hitting him once in the back and twice in his arms. Boyd collapsed, face down, crying out that he was unable to move. "Please don't hurt

me," he said. Another officer fired three beanbag rounds from a shotgun at Boyd's prone body. The K-9 officer again loosed his German shepherd on Boyd, and the dog tore into his legs. Finally, officers approached and handcuffed him.

After roughly 20 minutes, Boyd was transported in an ambulance to the University of New Mexico hospital. In the final hours of his life, Boyd had his right arm amputated and his spleen, a section of his lung and a length of his intestines removed. At 2:55 a.m., he was pronounced dead. He was the 22nd person killed by the Albuquerque police in just more than four years.

Boyd's death conformed to many of the patterns governing deadly police violence in Albuquerque. Living with mental illness, Boyd fit the profile of the marginal Albuquerqueans most likely to find themselves shot to death by the city's police. The escalation of a low-level encounter to a standoff involving numerous heavily armed officers wasn't anything new, either. Few were surprised when footage from the lapel camera that Officer Sandy was required to keep running was inexplicably absent. And, as in so many previous officer-involved shootings, Boyd's death was followed by a press conference by the chief of police, who declared the shooting justified and painted Boyd as a dangerous criminal.

But Boyd's case *was* different. While Officer Sandy's camera didn't produce any video, the helmet-mounted camera of the other shooter, Officer Perez, captured the whole awful sequence of Boyd's death. When the video was released, more than 1,000 citizens rose up in protest unlike anything the city had seen in generations. Police used tear gas against demonstrators and sent out plainclothes officers to collect

surveillance footage, further enraging the protesters.

Then this year, on January 12th, Bernalillo County District Attorney Kari Brandenburg made the announcement that her office was pursuing murder charges against officers Perez and Sandy for the death of James Boyd. (Lawyers for both said they intend to fight the charges. Sandy's lawyer, Sam Bregman, said in a statement, "Keith did nothing wrong. To the contrary, he followed his training and probably saved his fellow officer's life.")

In the past five years, the police department of Albuquerque, a city of just 550,000, has managed to kill 28 people—a per-capita kill rate nearly double that of the Chicago police and eight times that of the NYPD. Until now, not one of the officers in those 28 killings had been charged with any crime.

Albuquerque is hardly an outlier when it comes to police impunity. Brandenburg's announcement resonated far beyond New Mexico, as the pendulum seems to be swinging against police departments' use of violence to enforce the law. The U.S. Justice Department in the past five years has launched 22 investigations into civil rights violations by police departments—more than twice the number it had begun in the previous five years. Surprisingly, there are no reliable national statistics on the hundreds of fatal police shootings each year, or how many officers have been charged and convicted for such killings. "My guess is that the number of criminal convictions of officers each year would be on the fingers of one hand," says Franklin Zimring, the William G. Simon Professor of Law at UC Berkeley.

Last August, the killing of teenager Michael Brown by a cop in Ferguson, Missouri, triggered an outright crisis in this country's relationship with its police. When it was announced in November that there would be no indictment in Brown's killing, and then, a week later, that there also wouldn't be one in the death of Eric Garner at the hands of the NYPD, protests erupted in every major city in the country.

In many respects, the systemic meltdown of the APD (department motto: "In step with our community") offers an excellent lens through which to understand how police in America can run amok. Militarization of gear and tactics, an overreliance on specialized tactical units, a blue wall of silence that protects bad cops from the consequences of their actions, and a heavy hand in interactions with mentally ill citizens—all these factors, present in other departments around the country, are painfully evident in the story of how Albu-

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A Deadly Confrontation in the Desert



(1) When police roused James Boyd, a mentally ill homeless man camping in the foothills of Albuquerque, New Mexico, it turned into a tense standoff involving as many as 40 cops. Just as Boyd seemed about to surrender, officers Dominique Perez (2) and Keith Sandy (3) opened fire, hitting Boyd three times. The DA has charged them with murder.

Albuquerque's police came to kill so many of its citizens.

When protesters took to the city streets last spring after the release of the Boyd video, the police-reform movement sweeping the nation was still months away. Now the country at large is wrestling with questions about the very nature of law enforcement: How far do we let cops go in the pursuit of law and order, and how do we hold them accountable when they go too far? With the murder charges against the officers who killed Boyd, Albuquerque may well be the testing ground where some of the new answers to these old questions are fashioned.

DEPENDING ON HOW YOU MEASURE things, you could follow the roots of violent law enforcement in New Mexico as far back as Pat Garrett, Billy the Kid and the rough justice of the Old West. But many observers trace Albuquerque's recent problems with excessive force to a decade ago. In 2005, officers Richard Smith and Michael King were killed in the line of duty by a man they were picking up for a mental-health evaluation. King had been an academy classmate of Police Chief Ray Schultz, who, in a tearful press conference after the killings, called it "one of the saddest days in the history of the Albuquerque Police Department." Inside the department, former officers say, the deaths were a turning

point: Officer safety became the order of the day.

Thomas Grover, a lawyer and retired APD officer who now represents cops in personnel disputes with the department, says, "The general directive of the department became, 'You do what you've got to do to go home at night – and forget the citizens.'"

As *Breaking Bad* fans know, Albuquerque is not an easy place to be a police officer. Perhaps the only major city in the U.S. experiencing a double-dip recession, Albuquerque has a stagnant economy, and crime is a real problem. It's not out of control, however: Albuquerque has less than half the murder rate of Chicago.

The same year Smith and King were killed, Martin Chávez, a centrist Democrat, was running for a third term as mayor on a promise to increase police staffing from 1,000 officers to 1,100. When Chávez won, the department struggled to find enough qualified hires to make good on his promise.

"Standards were getting lower and lower," says retired APD Lt. Steven Tate,

who was the director of training at the police academy at the time. "They were hiring people that other agencies in New Mexico wouldn't take."

The department didn't formally change any hiring policies, Tate says. Instead, it bent the existing rules. Even in 2003, when Tate joined the meetings where the final hire decisions were made, the process was being warped. He recalls a conversation with members of the psychological staff tasked with screening applicants to make sure they were fit to be officers. "They said, '[Department brass] are always pressuring us to let people through,'" Tate says.

With the push to hire more cops, things got worse, according to Tate. The department made a number of dubious lateral hires – officers coming in from other law-enforcement departments. Previously, the APD had required all applicants, including laterals, to submit to thorough background checks as well as psychological exams. In 2006, the department began waiving those requirements for lateral hires. In testimony last year, Peter

DiVasto, a psychologist then employed by the APD, said that during this period, “people were hired that... never came through our unit.”

Among those hires were four officers who had just quit or been fired from the state police for double-dipping – getting paid for outside work even as they were on the clock for the state. They were among the contractors teaching classes at Coyote Canyon, a training site southeast of Albuquerque run by the Department of Energy where former Navy SEALs and Delta Force operators rub shoulders with state and local police officers, taking part in realistic live-fire drills and courses with names like “Rolling Day/Night Convoy Ambushes.” Though some former APD officers defend the realistic shoot-house training and expert instruction, others wonder whether such a militarized, gun-focused environment is a healthy part of training for young, impressionable officers. “Looking back,” one former officer told local KRQE News 13 reporter Jeff Proctor when he investigated police training at Coyote Canyon, “I’m really not sure how convoy ambushing translated to working as a police officer.”

The four officers who left the state police under a cloud for double-billing at Coyote Canyon in 2007 were snapped up by the Albuquerque police that same year. At the time, a deputy chief at the APD told reporters the problematic new hires wouldn’t be carrying badges or guns; they’d just be civilian employees, collecting evidence.

It didn’t turn out that way. One of those lateral hires was Keith Sandy, who was carrying both badge and gun when he killed James Boyd on the mountainside last March. Another was Sean Wallace, who was assigned to the department’s tactical K-9 unit in 2011 when he killed Alan Gomez. Gomez, who was struggling with substance abuse, was visiting his brother’s home when he started behaving erratically, holding his brother and his girlfriend against their will and brandishing a gun. The girlfriend called 911. At some point, Gomez put the gun down – it was later found in a closet. But when Wallace shot Gomez to death as he stood in the doorway, Gomez’s hands were either empty or, according to some accounts, holding a plastic spoon. Wallace claimed he thought he saw a gun. It was his third shooting in seven years, the second in which he’d killed

someone. Prosecutors ruled the shooting justified. The Gomez family sued the city and settled for \$900,000.

Wallace and Sandy are in good company. In a 2011 report, the Police Executive Research Forum studied Albuquerque’s police shootings from 2006 to 2010 and found that while officers hired in any given year were generally responsible for a few shooting incidents at most, the 2007 hires were responsible for nine, nearly twice as many as the nearest cohort. Since the study was conducted, three more shootings, including those of Gomez and Boyd, have brought the 2007 hires’ total up to at least a dozen. Tate believes that the department’s leadership was feeling pressured by the political machinery to

move on, through transfers, promotions and retirements, some of their replacements brought in a different attitude. “The focus was no longer on the mission as I understood it,” John says. “It was more about shooting people – as much as you could do so legally. The new culture was: ‘Anybody you could shoot.’”

The culture of violence wasn’t just evident on SWAT. Federal investigators faulted the department’s “permissive policy on weapons,” in which “officers see the guns as status symbols.” The APD still allows officers to carry their own personal weapons on the job, rather than the department-issued 9mm Glocks – at least until March, when a new policy is supposed to take effect. Former Officer Sam Costales recalls



Killed in His Parents’ Backyard

(1) Stephen and Renetta Torres’ mentally ill son Christopher (2) was killed by (3) APD detectives Richard Hilger (left) and Christopher Brown, who claimed he attacked them. A witness disputed the cops’ accounts, which a judge called “not credible.”



enlarge the force, and the results were predictable. “Instead of a handful of bad apples coming through,”

he says, “if you start lowering your standards, it’s two handfuls.”

BY THE BEGINNING OF THIS decade, as newer officers began to filter up through the department, veterans of the police force say they started to see a shift in the APD’s culture. “The idea of being a force for good was a very compelling thing for me,” says John, a former member of the department’s SWAT team, who didn’t want his real name used in this story. “And to be on the SWAT team, in my hometown, a big, violent town, then you were really a force for good.”

The men – and they were all men – John worked with when he joined the SWAT team in the early 2000s shared that ethos, he says. But as John’s colleagues began to

constant pressure from his fellow cops to upgrade his handgun. “They were like, ‘Oh, get a .45, get a .45,’” Costales says. “They just wanted the bigger firepower.”

Department rules require officers to qualify on the range with their personal guns in order to receive permission to carry them on the job, but the fallout from at least one police shooting suggests that rule wasn’t always taken seriously.

After Detective Trey Economidy shot Jacob Mitschelen, 29, during a traffic stop in 2011, it became clear that Economidy hadn’t qualified on the department’s range with the Kimber .45 he used to kill Mitschelen. (Economidy, who said Mitschelen had picked up a gun, was not charged, and the victim’s family settled with the city for \$300,000.) Media scrutiny of the incident turned up other troubling indicators of the culture within the APD: On his Facebook profile, Economidy listed his profession as “human waste disposal.” Economidy wasn’t alone in his sentiments. The same year, APD Detective Pete Dwyer

listed his profession on MySpace as “oxygen thief removal technician.”

Around the same time that John began to notice the anyone-you-can-shoot ethos creeping into SWAT – once a competitive assignment only available to seasoned officers – the unit began accepting green cops with as little as three years out of the academy. John says he watched in dismay as these younger, impressionable officers absorbed the new culture of violence on SWAT. “It reminded me of *Animal Farm*,” he says. “The dog, she has the puppies, and Napoleon came along and took the puppies away, and then the puppies show up again at the end, and they’re, like, these vicious killers. It was like that.”

John maintains that most Albuquerque cops are careful, restrained and good. But the changes on SWAT provoked a moral crisis for him. His whole career, he’d pushed back against the characterization of police as violent thugs. “I understand: We represent authority. ‘Fuck authority’ – I get that. But to take it to dehumanizing us, where you’re just a murderer, a criminal, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, I found that very offensive. And so to come to the end of my career and see that it was true – it totally messed me up.”

AS THESE CHANGES WERE TAKING place inside the department and police shootings began to spike, there was little public outrage. “The targets of police violence were gang members, drunks or street people, and so it wasn’t like they were preying on the people who had voted for the politicians,” says Jerry Ortiz y Pino, a state senator who represents Albuquerque. “They were preying on the people the politicians were all too glad to see silenced.”

The hostility of the city’s government to its homeless population is perhaps best illustrated by an episode from 2010, when police began arresting volunteers who were feeding the downtown homeless on Sundays. “Who gave them permission to feed the homeless at all?” asked an internal police e-mail concerning the operation against the volunteers. The e-mail made clear that the initiative had the approval of City Hall. “Darren White [public-safety director at the time] is allowing us to take the gloves off and deal with some issues of concern,” the e-mail began. “WOOOOOOOOOOOOO HOOOOO!!!!!!”

For former APD Officer Dan Klein, the jailing of people for feeding the homeless shows why it’s so hard to get popular support for police reform: “If your income is above \$200,000 a year, and you live in a nice gated community, and you don’t want to be bothered by the panhandler, and you don’t want your kids to be accosted by the

drunk outside of Trader Joe’s, are you crying elephant tears for James Boyd?” he asks. It’s not a problem unique to Albuquerque, Klein adds. “It’s everywhere – we’re just the pimple that is bursting.”

If the public wasn’t tracking the curdling police culture, neither, for the most part, was the press. One crucial exception was Jeff Proctor, who, working first for the *Albuquerque Journal* and then for KRQE, broke many stories about the dirty doings inside the APD. Proctor is well-sourced in the law-enforcement community, but one thing has always struck him about the department: “The lack of whistle-blowers,” he says. “That says something.”

The story of Sam Costales helps to explain why so few officers spoke up. By his

“IT WASN’T ABOUT THE MISSION,” SAYS A FORMER SWAT MEMBER. “THE NEW CULTURE WAS: ‘ANYBODY YOU COULD SHOOT.’”

own description, Costales didn’t fit easily into the culture of the APD. Early on during his time on the force, Costales learned that many officers had a style he wanted no part of. But he figured out how to work inside the APD. He didn’t hit people and tried to avoid working with officers who did. Sometimes that wasn’t possible. Early in his career, Costales says, he agreed to write a report saying that another officer had injured his ankle while chasing a suspect, not while kicking the suspect mercilessly in the ribs once he’d caught him.

Costales retired in 2001, after 20 years on the force. At his retirement party, he says, another officer asked him what his biggest regret was. “I said, the fact that I witnessed all the crap that cops do to people and I didn’t have the guts to come forward and say anything,” Costales says. “I thought I was a good cop, but I was no better than the rest of them.”

A few years after retiring, Costales agreed to come back to the department under a deal that let him keep his pension

while earning a full salary. One day in the summer of 2006, he says, he was helping set up a perimeter around the site of a car chase when he witnessed Bernalillo County sheriff’s deputies angrily confronting Al Unser, a 67-year-old pro race-car driver and former winner of the Indy 500, who, misunderstanding the roadblock, had attempted to drive around it on his own property. According to Costales, the deputies dragged Unser out of his car, jumped on his back, forced his face into the brambles and arrested him. The incident troubled Costales, and he reached out to Unser’s family to tell them he’d seen what happened. When Unser’s attorneys called on him to testify in Unser’s trial, Costales took the stand, describing what he’d seen.

The testimony set off a maelstrom of recriminations against Costales. The Bernalillo County sheriff called Albuquerque Police Chief Schultz to complain that one of his officers had testified against fellow cops. Schultz made a public announcement that he’d be investigating Costales for failing to report the incident up his chain of command. (Costales had reported the incident, but it had been dismissed as insignificant.) Perhaps emboldened by Schultz, the secretary of the Albuquerque Police Officers Association e-mailed the sheriff to apologize for Costales, saying most officers were “embarrassed and ashamed” of Costales. The e-mail found its way to the media. Costales says that word spread through the ranks that if he requested backup on the job, he wouldn’t get it.

Costales became anxious and stressed. He started seeing a psychiatrist. His request for a transfer off street patrol to a safer post was denied. Instead, his superiors threatened to assign him to the auto-theft division, which was housed inside the sheriff’s department substation – the same people Costales had testified against. Costales sued Schultz and the APD in federal court, and in 2009 a jury found that Schultz had violated Costales’ civil rights. The city eventually reached an almost \$1 million settlement with Costales.

THE SAME YEAR SCHULTZ COST Albuquerque nearly \$1 million, Martin Chávez lost his re-election campaign to Richard Berry, a former state congressman. Bucking tradition, the new mayor kept Schultz on the job rather than hiring his own chief. Berry continued to stick by Schultz even as the APD’s body count started to mount. Officers killed nine people in 2010. One of the first was Kenneth Ellis III, a decorated 25-year-old veteran of the Iraq War who was suffering from PTSD and had been kicked out of his Veterans Affairs treatment program. One day, while investigating a stolen car, cops

cornered Ellis in the parking lot of a 7-Eleven. Ellis pulled out his gun, held it to his head and phoned his mother for help. Soon, he was surrounded by police officers. He never threatened anyone but himself. Nonetheless, after a nine-minute standoff, Officer Brett Lampiris-Tremba shot Ellis in the neck, killing him. After he fired the shot, Lampiris-Tremba asked, "Fuck, was that me?"

In 2011, the APD killed another five people, including Christopher Torres. Growing up in Albuquerque as the youngest of three boys, Torres was cheerful, funny and bright, dreaming of growing up to become a lawyer like his father. "The world was at his doorstep," Stephen Torres recalls of his son. But around Christopher's senior year in high school, his family began to notice something changing in him. In 2003, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

The family was devastated but rallied around Christopher, finding good psychiatrists and getting him on a regimen of medication. A family friend gave him a job at a steel-manufacturing business. "He was very high-functioning," says

their case. Christopher raised his hand as if to strike Brown, but Brown hit him first, and the two went down on the ground. In the resulting scuffle, Detective Hilger hit Christopher repeatedly in the face. Christopher, apparently confused, shouted, "I'm a good guy! This is my house!" Hilger testified that Christopher managed to wrangle his gun out of its holster, and that Hilger called out for Brown to shoot. Brown, who had been rejected by the APD before successfully reapplying after the requirements for lateral hires were relaxed, fired three shots at Christopher, hitting him all three times and killing him.

Afterward, police swarmed the neighborhood, setting off flash-bang grenades and, according to the Torreses, ransacking their home. If the intention of all this mayhem was, as the family suspects, to muddy the water after a transparently bad shooting, it didn't work. Unbeknownst to the police, a neighbor had witnessed crucial parts of the fatal encounter through chinks in her backyard fence. Christie Apodaca would later testify that far from the struggle Brown and Hilger described, she

never saw Christopher resisting – just one detective hitting him over and over again while the other detective held him down.

que to do something. "We'd go to the city council," says Gomez. "They'd look at us, they'd act like they cared, and then they wouldn't do anything."

AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF unsuccessfully pleading with local elected officials to rein in the APD, in November 2012 the relatives of the victims, with the support of groups like the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center, finally persuaded the U.S. Justice Department to open a civil rights investigation into the Albuquerque Police Department. When the DOJ released its findings last April, shortly after Boyd was killed, they amounted to a scorching indictment of the APD and everyone who had enabled its slide into brutality. Reviewing 20 fatal police shootings from 2009 to 2012, the report found a majority of them to be unconstitutional. "Albuquerque police officers shot and killed civilians who did not pose an imminent threat," the report found, noting that "Albuquerque police officers' own recklessness sometimes

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FOUND THAT THE APD "KILLED CIVILIANS WHO DID NOT POSE AN IMMINENT THREAT."

Christopher's mother, Renetta, a high-ranking official in the county government.

Stephen was painfully aware of the risks people living with mental illness face when interacting with police. So he proactively alerted the APD to Christopher's condition, making sure his son was assigned a Crisis Intervention Team officer (a specialist trained to de-escalate interactions with people in mental distress), and asking to be notified first if the police ever had cause to want to speak with Christopher.

On the afternoon of April 12th, 2011, Christopher, then 27, was relaxing in his backyard when detectives Christopher Brown and Richard Hilger called to him over the fence. Brown and Hilger were investigating a road-rage incident from months earlier in which Christopher was suspected. Whether the detectives were there to arrest Christopher or simply interview him is unclear – they've testified to both at various times. In any case, the detectives hadn't done much homework on Christopher – they didn't know he was schizophrenic, and they hadn't contacted his CIT officer or his family.

Dressed in plainclothes, neither officer had brought his department-mandated cameras with him on the assignment. According to Detective Brown's testimony, he hopped the fence and approached Christopher, taking his handcuffs out of

never saw Christopher resisting – just one detective hitting him over and over again while the other detective held him down.

At trial for the Torreses' civil suit, the police version of events quickly unraveled. "The testimony of the Detectives... is inconsistent with each other, inconsistent with what Ms. Apodaca saw, and inconsistent with the physical evidence," wrote District Judge C. Shannon Bacon in her findings. "The testimony of the Detectives is not credible."

Christopher's death was unusual because it brought the deadly violence of the APD into a relatively comfortable neighborhood, to a respected, professional family. Renetta Torres says the mother of another man killed by the APD told her that nothing was going to change until the police violence came to a family like the Torreses. "She said she was very sorry that we lost Christopher," says Renetta, "but she felt that it probably took something like Christopher's killing to move forward."

The Torreses banded together with relatives of other people killed by the APD and began looking for justice. Along with Kenneth Ellis II, the father of the veteran killed in the 7-Eleven parking lot, and Mike Gomez, whose son Alan was killed standing in his brother's doorway, as well as more than a dozen others, they began petitioning the government of Albuquerque

led to their use of deadly force."

Citing the case of Ellis, the veteran killed while holding a gun to his own head, the report found that "police officers used deadly force on individuals in crisis who posed no threat to anyone but themselves," and cited multiple examples of "excessive force against individuals with mental illness, against individuals with impaired faculties and against individuals who require medical treatment."

As stark as the report's conclusions were, its details, chronicling in dispassionate tones one horrible abuse after another, are perhaps more disturbing. A typical passage describes a 2009 encounter with a drunk 60-year-old, identified in the report by the pseudonym "Albert," whose friend had called the cops claiming Albert threatened him with a knife and a pellet gun:

"Forty-seven officers responded to the scene, including snipers and officers from specialized tactical units. After some delay, Albert complied with officers' orders to drop a knife that he was holding... and walked outside unarmed. After an additional delay, he stopped and began to turn. At that point, an officer was ordered to 'bag him.' An officer with a shotgun fired five successive rounds of beanbags at Albert. Another officer deployed a flash-bang grenade. Another officer shot him with a canister of four wooden batons,



STREETS OF RAGE After the video of Boyd's killing, protests erupted in Albuquerque.

two of which penetrated his skin. Another officer deployed a police canine that bit Albert in the arm, tearing his flesh as the dog tried to pull him down. . . . Two officers fired Tasers at Albert; one of them fired six five-second cycles of electricity into him. Albert finally collapsed, and officers carried him away unconscious, leaving behind a trail of blood and urine."

The Justice report places much of the blame for these problems on a macho, dick-swinging culture of violence among street-level officers, beginning with training that "leads officers to believe that violent outcomes are normal and desirable." But it concludes that that culture has been enabled by the department's leadership and allowed to flourish by ineffective civilian oversight. "Officers have faced little scrutiny from their superiors," the report found. "External oversight is broken and has allowed the department to remain unaccountable."

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT investigation gave rise to some optimism that the APD and city government might finally recognize that they have a problem and undertake real reform. That hope was kindled further when, four months after the DOJ's announcement that it would be opening an investigation, Schultz declared his intention to retire as police chief. But close observers of the department saw reasons to be skeptical that anything was really improving.

For one thing, changes in the police leadership weren't exactly encouraging. Mayor Berry selected Gordon Eden, a politically connected former U.S. marshal who had most recently headed up the Department of Public Safety under Republi-

can Gov. Susana Martinez. Upon his appointment, Eden promised a proactive reform campaign to "take the department well beyond any findings the DOJ has." But Eden's subsequent actions proved disappointing and baffling to many.

Two days before the DOJ singled out the city's SWAT team for special criticism in its blistering report, Eden announced that his deputy chief would be Robert Huntsman, who had spent 10 years as the APD lieutenant in charge of special units, including SWAT. A month later, Eden made another top-level appointment, promoting Tim Gonterman to major. Eight years earlier, a federal jury had awarded a homeless African-American man named Jerome Hall \$300,000 in a suit alleging that Gonterman, then a patrol officer, had applied a Taser to the unarmed Hall so relentlessly that Hall was eventually hospitalized with burns to his face, stomach, back, neck, shoulders and calf. According to his lawyer, Hall also lost part of his ear to the Taser burns.

"I've used Tasers," says Klein, the former officer. "The only way you can burn someone's ear off is if you're torturing them. And that guy's a major now!"

It also became clear that for all his public rhetoric of cooperation, Mayor Berry and his administration weren't just going to meekly accept the Justice Department's findings and recommendations. In June 2014, city lawyers argued in federal court that the DOJ's conclusions shouldn't be allowed into evidence in a trial concerning police use of force, saying the report was plagued by "inconsistent language," "inaccuracies" and "questions of reliability."

The Albuquerque Police Department declined to make its leadership available

for this story and didn't respond to further requests for comment, instead suggesting an interview with Edmund Perea, a former commanding officer with the APD now in private practice as a lawyer. "Most active members of the community as well as police personnel saw these issues coming down the tracks like a train for years," he says. "There were a lot of parts that may have been allowed to fester without administrative attention. As we look back at the situation here, no one involved in police policy and operation should get a pass."

Last October, after months of secretive negotiations, the Justice Department and the city of Albuquerque announced the terms of a settlement agreement – the steps Albuquerque would have to take to avoid being sued by the federal government and potentially giving up control of its police department. The terms of the 106-page agreement aren't terribly surprising: They include reforms to the department's policies and training, and how the department investigates officers' use of force. The department must beef up its protections for people with mental illness; its tactical units must be made more accountable; oversight bodies must be instituted. In January, it announced the selection of a monitor to oversee Albuquerque's compliance.

People who know the APD are worried the DOJ's intervention won't be enough. "I don't see any evidence, behaviorwise, of a buy-in from the police department," says Steven Tate, the retired lieutenant in charge of training. "I'm not seeing any indication that they actually want to fix the issue. They just want to do the bare minimum. The DOJ can say, 'You need to have these policies.' Well, we have had a lot of them. Ninety percent of what they said should have been going on in the past."

The problem isn't policies, it's people, says state Sen. Ortiz y Pino. He thinks the only solution is to clear out generations of bad cops. "Let's get them out of here, let's really start out with a new mentality," he says. "We're gonna be plagued with these guys for years to come. They know this is all fake. They can hunker down until the Department of Justice goes away, and then it will be back to business as usual."

Of course, to truly change the culture of the APD would require a police chief committed to that project. Such a chief would have to be appointed by a mayor who made it a priority. And as the anger that flared after the release of the Boyd video has subsided, many doubt that Albuquerque voters care enough about the issue to demand a mayor who will make police reform a priority.

"We have the police that the people of Albuquerque want," says Ortiz y Pino. "You've got 25 percent who [Cont. on 58]"


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Dylan Digs Into a Deeper Blues



Covering romantic pop songs once sung by Sinatra, he finds a new way into rock history



Bob Dylan

Shadows in the Night Columbia

★★★★

BY DAVID FRICKE

As an encore at almost every show on his North American tour last fall, Bob Dylan performed an unlikely ballad: “Stay With Me,” recorded by Frank Sinatra on a 1964 single and written for a 1963 film, *The Cardinal*, about a young priest who ascends to a post in the Vatican. Sinatra cut the song, a prayer for guidance, as if from on high, in orchestration as grand as papal robes. On this quietly provocative and compelling album, Dylan enters the words and melody – as he did onstage – like a suppliant, in a tiptoe baritone through streaks of pedal steel guitar that suggest the chapel-like quiet of a last-chance saloon. But Dylan’s need is immediate, even carnal, and he pleads his case with a survivor’s force, in a deep, shockingly clear voice that sounds like rebirth in itself. In stripping the song to pure, robust confession, Dylan turns “Stay With Me” into the most fundamental of Great American Songs: a blues.

Dylan transforms everything on *Shadows in the Night* – 10 slow-dance covers, mostly romantic standards from the pre-rock era of American popular songwriting – into a barely-there noir of bowed bass and throaty shivers of electric guitar. There are occasional dusky flourishes of brass (the

moaning curtain of horns in "The Night We Called It a Day"), but the most prominent voice, other than Dylan's, is his steel guitarist Donny Herron's plaintive cries of Hawaiian and West Texas sorrow. Sinatra is a connecting presence: He recorded all of these songs, and Dylan made *Shadows* at the Capitol Records studio in Los Angeles where Sinatra did his immortal work for that label. Sinatra even co-wrote the first song, "I'm a Fool to Want You," in 1951. When Dylan crawls uphill through the line "To share a kiss that the devil has known," it is easy to hear Sinatra's then-tumultuous romance with Ava Gardner – along with echoes of the wounded desire Dylan left all over *Blood on the Tracks*.

Yet *Shadows in the Night* is less a tribute to Sinatra than a belated successor to Dylan's 1992 and '93 LPs of solo folk and blues covers, *Good as I Been to You* and *World Gone Wrong*: a spare, restorative turn to voices that have, in some way, always been present in his own. "Autumn Leaves" and Irving Berlin's "What'll I Do" are the kind of ladies' choices Dylan surely played with his Fifties bands at school dances. "That Lucky Old Sun" (Number One for Frankie Laine in 1949) turned up in Dylan's early-Nineties set lists, but that's no surprise: Its near-suicidal resignation is not far from that of Blind Willie McTell's "Broke Down Engine," on *World Gone Wrong*, or Dylan's own "Love Sick," on 1997's *Time Out of Mind*.

The great shock here, then, is Dylan's singing. Dylan's focus and his diction, after years of drowning in sandpaper, evoke his late-Sixties poise and clarity on *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline* – also records of deceptive restraint and retrospect – with an eccentric rhythmic patience in the way he holds words and notes across the faint suggestions of tempo. It is not crooning. It is suspense: Dylan, at 73, keeping fate at arm's length as he looks for new lessons, nuance and solace in well-told tales.



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Vulnerable but strong: Björk

Björk Finds the Beauty in a World of Pain

The Icelandic art-pop queen charts the breaking of a heart on a devastatingly direct album

Björk *Vulnicura* One Little Indian ★★★★★



Björk's 2011 *Biophilia* addressed the universe, from molecular to cosmic levels, and was presented in elaborate formats, including an interactive app. Her latest couldn't be simpler: a breakup album, that most common pop coin. But with Björk, even simplicity is intricate business. Arranged for voice with orchestral strings and electronic beats, *Vulnicura* is a unified set of nine dark, swarming, melodically distended songs. There is clearly some autobiography here about her relationship with artist/co-parent Matthew Barney. But whatever informed it, this may be the most heart-rending music she's ever made.

The first six songs chart the before-and-after arc of a crisis, pivoting on the 10-minute "Black Lake." It's the set's most devastating number, unfurling in slow-mo, with knife-twist lyrics ("Your heart is hollow") and droning gaps that read like choked emotions. Electronic prodigies Arca and the Haxan Cloak add production touches here and there; "Atom Dance" is a digitally distressed duet with Antony, recalling the break between human and computer in 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. But this is primarily the sound of a woman alone, riven yet indomitable. When, on "Black Lake," she declares she is a "Rocket/Returning home," trilling her *r*'s, it's a scarred triumph.

WILL HERMES

KEY TRACKS:

"Black Lake," "Atom Dance"



Fifth Harmony

Reflection Epic

★★★★½

Infectious empowerment from a group of 'X Factor' alums

When it comes to girl groups in a post-Beyoncé world, female empowerment is the name of the game. On the debut from Fifth Harmony (which formed during the second season of *The X Factor*, in 2012), high self-esteem feels like a party. Infectious lyrics like "Think I'm in love, 'cause you so sexy/ Boy, I ain't talkin' 'bout you, I'm talkin' to my own reflection" complement club-ready beats that leave no room for saccharine ballads. (Partial credit goes to "All About That Bass" singer Meghan Trainor, who co-wrote several songs.) The standout is "Like Mariah," which samples Carey's ageless 1995 hit "Always Be My Baby" and more than lives up to her sainted image.

BRITTANY SPANOS



Various Artists

Fifty Shades of Grey: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack Republic ★★★★★

Sia and the Weeknd highlight a freaky pop blockbuster

Taking cues from the *Twilight* and *Hunger Games* soundtracks, this companion to *Fifty Shades of Grey* is a blockbuster in its own right. Sexing up the affair are new songs by artists like Sia and Ellie Goulding, a couple of hot Beyoncé remixes and the occasional classic (Rolling Stones, Frank Sinatra). There's even a Springsteen cover: Awolnation's smoldering "I'm on Fire." On "Meet Me in the Middle," Jessie Ware oozes soulful sensuality over a Prince-style bump-and-grind. But it's the Weeknd who works in the darkest shades on "Earned It (Fifty Shades of Grey)," which, with its whiplash strings, brings some Bond-theme drama to all the kink.

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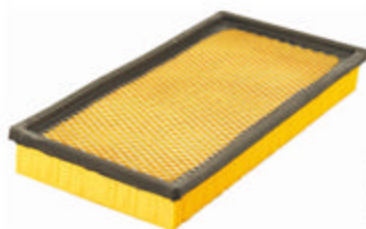
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Steve Earle

Terraplane New West

★★★★½

A country maverick throws a down-home Texas blues party

For his 16th album, country renegade Steve Earle gets in touch with the hardboiled blues of his native Texas – not the sad-slurring, throw-yourself-in-the-bayou blues, but the bar-stomping variety. Songs like the scorching “Go Go Boots Are Back” are stacked with the tight musicianship of his longtime band the Dukes, including vocalist/fiddle player Eleanor Whitmore, who duets with Earle on the Western-swing tune “Baby’s Just as Mean as Me.” Earle lets some darkness creep in on the slow-burning “Better Off Alone” (he recently ended his seventh marriage). But *Terraplane* is less a soul-searcher than a sturdy vehicle, built to chug through hard times.

JESSICA MACHADO



Jessica Pratt

On Your Own Love Again

Drag City ★★★★★

West Coast folkie plays tricks with your heart, and the clock

Jessica Pratt’s songs almost seem to bend time to her will. The West Coast folk singer-guitarist doesn’t need much more than her delicately played nylon-string guitar and mezzo-soprano voice to give her second album an uncanny impact. Pratt’s jazz-steeped singing and rich guitar harmonies can recall early Joni Mitchell, or a nimble, less overbearing twist on the psychedelic folk of 21st-century artists like Joanna Newsom. “Your love is just a myth I devised,” she sings on “Back, Baby,” a breezy tune about a broken relationship. On “Jacquelyn in the Background,” another highlight, she slows the tape down, letting the music melt into strange – and strangely moving – new shapes.

JEREMY D. LARSON



Wild
“Honey”:
Misty

A Folk-Rock Trickster’s Mellow Gold

Ex-Fleet Foxes drummer Father John Misty breaks out with lush songs of love and madness

Father John Misty *I Love You, Honeybear*

Sub Pop ★★★★★



Singer-songwriter Josh Tillman debuted “Bored in the U.S.A.” – a highlight of his ornate second LP as Father John Misty – on *Letterman* with a Celine Dion-worthy string orchestra, a wayward laugh track and prankster soulfulness. “Save me, white Jesus..../They gave me a useless education/And a subprime loan on a Craftsman home,” he crooned, with acuity even Springsteen might admire, along with any fan of heartbroken-wiseguy songcraft.

Upping the spectacle from *Fun Fear*, his 2012 debut, *I Love You, Honeybear* is an autobiographical set about love, marriage and derangement that’s both ironic and empathic – an approach connecting him less to his previous band, Fleet Foxes, than to the SoCal tradition of Randy Newman, Harry Nilsson and Beck. Shaped by folk-rock swami Jonathan Wilson, the details bring it home: the corny poignancy of mariachi horns and strings on “Chateau Lobby #4 (in C for Two Virgins),” a cage match with sentimentality; the scalding guitar on “The Ideal Husband,” a lover’s panic attack. Yes, dude’s funny. But the “jokes” are on everyone. “No one ever knows the real you/And life is brief,” he sings on “Holy Shit.” It’s too fucking true. But he makes you feel better about it.

KEY TRACKS:
“Bored in the U.S.A.,” “Holy Shit”

WILL HERMES



Viet Cong

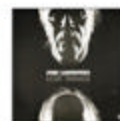
Viet Cong Jagjaguwar

★★★★

Dark, noisy Canadian rock crew stares death in the face

Calgary’s Viet Cong were formed by ex-members of the late-’00s art-noise band Women, and they display a similar love of dark humor and dissonant guitars. The new band’s debut arrives three years, almost to the day, after Women guitarist Christopher Reimer died mysteriously in his sleep at age 26. Viet Cong hardly shy away from evoking that tragedy, and at times they seem to still be processing its long-term impact: Check the throttling 11-minute opus “Death.” It’s impossible not to nod along to synth-swelled tracks like “Pointless Experience,” even if the chorus is “If we’re lucky/We’ll get old and die.” These guys wear their goth-punk Purple Heart proudly.

PAULA MEJIA



John Carpenter

Lost Themes Sacred Bones

★★★★½

A Seventies soundtrack master releases his first real album

Director-composer John Carpenter’s skeletal, synth-heavy soundtracks were a hallmark of his Seventies and Eighties sci-fi and horror movies, from *Halloween* to *Escape From New York*. They’ve also influenced plenty of electronic music and art pop. Now, at 67, Carpenter is releasing his first true solo album (made with his son and godson), which has elements that might appeal to metalheads, goths and minimalist-EDM fans alike. The icy synths of “Vortex” and “Fallen” evoke vintage Carpenter dread. But the prog-pomp of “Domain” and “Mystery” are the aural equivalent of too much CGI. Only on the atmospheric closer, “Night,” can you really picture Kurt Russell out on a post-apocalyptic prow.

ANDY BETA



Diana Krall

Wallflower Verve

★★★

A jazz veteran's personal tour of rock and pop memories

Diana Krall is a jazz pianist and vocalist who has recorded Brazilian music, Thirties jazz and songs co-written with her husband, Elvis Costello. So this collection of favorites by the likes of Randy Newman, the Carpenters, Jim Croce, Bob Dylan and Elton John, among others, fits easily into her tastefully eclectic comfort zone. Krall's elegant, personalized readings and pop veteran David Foster's string-heavy production can give a song like 10cc's "I'm Not in Love" or the Eagles' "Desperado" the glint of a modern standard. Even a Michael Bublé cameo on Gilbert O'Sullivan's "Alone Again (Naturally)" can't wreck the power of Krall's beautifully desolate rendition. **JON DOLAN**



Sisqó

Last Dragon Massenburg/DMG

★★½

After 14 years, the man who gave us "Thong Song" returns

It's been 14 years since "Thong Song" Lothario Sisqó released an album – he's kind of like D'Angelo, if everyone forgot to remember he was gone. In the intervening years, Sisqó has released a couple of albums with his Nineties R&B group Dru Hill and appeared on shows like *Celebrity Big Brother* and *Celebrity Wife Swap*. On *Last Dragon*, he slathers his raspy croon over tracks like the Motown-y "Round & Round," the Eighties smoothie "Ipologize" and the Dru Hill-assisted slow-jam "Victim." "I been on top of my game," he sings on "A-List," a club thumper featuring Waka Flocka Flame. That isn't saying a ton, but at least he's spending more time making records than swapping wives, for once. **JON DOLAN**



A Feminist Folk Revival for the 21st Century

T Bone Burnett's favorite new singer reanimates roots-music history on her self-assured debut

Rhiannon Giddens *Tomorrow Is My Turn* Nonesuch

★★★½



Over the past two years, Rhiannon Giddens has become one of the most promising voices in American roots music. The frontwoman for adventurous string-band trio the Carolina Chocolate Drops, she's taken show-stealing turns on T Bone Burnett-helmed projects like last year's *New Basement Tapes*, doing retooled Bob Dylan tunes alongside Marcus Mumford and Elvis Costello, and at the blockbuster 2013 New York concert that coincided with the release of the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis*. Now, with the Chocolate Drops on hiatus, Giddens is having a solo coming-out party, displaying her classical vocal training and ability to reanimate traditional music in her own nuanced image.

Produced by Burnett, *Tomorrow Is My Turn* is a feminist tour of the American roots canon – from Nina Simone to Dolly Parton to Odetta. Giddens digs into the tortured lost tales of folk-song heroines like Geeshie Wiley and Elizabeth Cotten. Backed by slick session pros, a song like Sister Rosetta Tharpe's "Up Above My Head" doesn't quite achieve the blazing gospel fury it deserves. But most of the time, as on a soulful version of Patsy Cline's "She's Got You," Giddens imbues these classics with a freshness and vitality that feel right at home in 2015. **JONATHAN BERNSTEIN**

KEY TRACKS:

"She's Got You," "Shake Sugaree"



José González

Vestiges & Claws Mute

★★★

Swedish folkie unfurls his gentle beauty, very slowly

Swedish singer-songwriter José González's new album – which is just the third LP from the 36-year-old artist, in a 12-year solo career – sticks to the formula that has served him well in the past. Intricate fingerpicking backs up his soft vocals; melodies flow without urgency; vague but evocative lyrics drift to the surface. González's lyrics focus on aging and the inevitability of loss. "All of this will be gone someday," goes the refrain on the yearning "Afterglow." The album's best track, the fragile meditation "Open Book," is its last – which makes perfect sense coming from someone whose subtle, carefully crafted music delivers rewards to listeners who know how to wait. **SOPHIE WEINER**



Kid Ink

Full Speed Alumni/88 Classic/RCA

★★½

A so-so rapper who's got some Kanye-size ambitions

L.A. rapper Kid Ink stormed the charts in late 2013 – not as a unique hip-hop voice but as a conduit for DJ Mustard beats and Chris Brown guest spots. On his second major-label album, he has more artistic aspirations, though they're mostly flat Kanye retreads: obscure prog-rock samples ("Faster"), "All of the Lights"-style horn arrangements ("What It Feels Like"), and recruiting today's hot young regional sensations (DeJ Loaf, Young Thug, Migos) as supporting cast. But excellently crafted radio fare – the candy-coated "Body Language," the Snootie Wild-inspired "Dolo" and the Nineties-R&B-steeped "About Mine" – sticks out, even if Kid Ink doesn't. **CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN**



(1) Trzebuchowska takes the veil in *Ida*. (2) A Soviet hockey team sparks in *Red Army*. (3) Dorval and Pilon face off in *Mommy*. (4) Cotillard gets axed in *Two Days, One Night*.



Subtitles Won't Kill You

A Polish nun, a Soviet hockey team and Marion Cotillard transcend language By Peter Travers

Ida

Agata Trzebuchowska

Directed by Paweł Pawlikowski

★★★★

NOW THAT THIS HAUNTING Polish film starring and directed by artists with unpronounceable names has been nominated for a foreign-language Oscar and for its exquisite, boxy, black-and-white cinematography, *Ida* is back in the conversation. Even if it's not at a nearby theater, you can buy or rent it on Blu-ray or stream it on Netflix. As for the bitching that the English subtitles are too small to read on a smartphone, come on. They're no smaller than a tweet. Don't be a lazy-ass.

Ida is an art film in the finest sense of the term – it is austere technique counterbalanced by emotions that bleed. Director and co-writer Paweł Pawlikowski (*My Summer of Love*) sets his tale in 1962, when convent-raised Anna (Agata Trzebuchowska), 18, is about to take her final vows. That's when she

learns she has an aunt, Wanda (Agneta Kulesza), a boozy, chain-smoking judge known for her hard line against enemies of Communism. Wanda is Jewish, as is Anna. It was Wanda who abandoned her niece, born Ida Lebenstein, and participated in the judicial terrors of the time. It takes a scant 80 minutes for Pawlikowski to let his story of saint and sinner unfold on the faces of his two remarkable actresses. No spoilers here, only my advice to avoid multiplex crapola like *Mortdecai* and *The Wedding Ringer* and let yourself be enveloped by a modern cinema classic.

Red Army

Slava Fetisov

Directed by Gabe Polsky

★★★½

GABE POLSKY'S ELECTRIFYING look at a once-unbeatable Soviet hockey team and the link between sports and politics isn't among the Oscar nominees for best documentary. But

Red Army deserves a big booyah from audiences for being illuminating and hugely entertaining. And if some of the talk is in Russian, live with it.

In 2004's *Miracle*, with Kurt Russell, we saw how a U.S. team of underdogs defeated the Soviets at the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid. *Red Army* gives us the Soviet side of that *Miracle* on Ice, and it's an eye-opener.

Polsky could not have found a better no-bull narrator than Slava Fetisov, the Soviet team captain who later defected to the West. Fetisov's tales of what his dream team suffered under party-line coach Viktor Tikhonov sound less like training sessions than hard time in a gulag. Even when Fetisov and some of his teammates reunite in the 1990s to win back-to-back Stanley Cups for the Detroit Red Wings, they still get dissed as balletic robots. Polsky takes a jaunty approach, but the thorny subject of what constitutes national identity comes through loud and clear.

Two Days, One Night

Marion Cotillard

Directed by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne

★★★½

THE BEAUTY AND TALENT of Marion Cotillard are a sure cure for subtitle allergies. Her Oscar-nominated performance in *Two Days, One Night* is a marvel. But be warned. Character trumps action for the Belgian filmmaking brothers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne. The plot, such as it is, focuses on Cotillard going door-to-door trying to get her job back. No sex, no chases, no cyberterrorism. Just people interacting.

Cotillard plays Sandra, the wife of Manu (Fabrizio Rongione), a kitchen employee, and the mother of their two kids. Sandra is a worker bee at a solar-panel factory. But her 16 co-workers voted to eliminate her job so they can keep their annual bonus. In desperation, she orchestrates a weekend plan to persuade her colleagues

to change their minds. That's the movie: Sandra pleading, with the camera on her tail like a Dardenne drone. Astonishingly, it all works. From the theme of global downsizing, the Dardennes wring humor, heartbreak, suspense and stirring social drama. Whether her character is popping Xanax, entreating co-workers whose problems dwarf her own, or sitting in a car listening to rock, Cotillard is magnificent, her luminous eyes reflecting a soul in crisis. *Two Days, One Night* is a film for its time, bristling with peril and alive to every flicker of human decency.

Mommy

Anne Dorval,
Antoine-Olivier Pilon

Directed by Xavier Dolan

★★★★½

THIS CANADIAN FILM – YES, it means mostly French is spoken – has been described as an emotional horror show. It'll shake you, that's for damn sure. Writer-director Xavier Dolan, 25, debuted six years ago with *I Killed My Mother*. Oedipal issues are still at the fore in *Mommy*, in which 15-year-old, omnisequal, seemingly bipolar Steve (Antoine-Olivier Pilon) is more than two handfuls for his widowed mother, Diana "Die" Després (Anne Dorval).

A proposed Quebec law may allow a parent to institutionalize a child without a court procedure. That sets Die to thinking. She's 50-ish, but those tight pants and skyscraper heels suggest a carnal spirit. The trouble is that blond, blue-eyed Steve can be a charmer when he's not setting fire to things or threatening physical harm. For help, Die leans on her neighbor (Suzanne Clément), a fragile-looking teacher with no perceived ability to keep the comet that is Steve in a home-school shoebox.

Here's the thing about *Mommy*. Even when Dolan gets self-indulgent and works his themes into the ground, he's a one-man fireworks display. His images jump off the screen and stick in your head. Pilon keeps coming at you. But it's Dorval whose tour de force breaks through barriers of culture and language. Just watch Dorval. She dares you not to.

Now Playing (in English)

Black or White

Kevin Costner, Octavia Spencer, Jillian Estell

Directed by Mike Binder

★★★

KEVIN COSTNER GIVES EVERYTHING he's got to the role of Elliot Anderson, a widowed Los Angeles lawyer with a penchant for the bottle and a shot of self-pity. Elliot finds what focus he can in his seven-year-old biracial granddaughter, Eloise (Jillian Es-

stereotypes. The contrast between Elliot's whitey affluence and the lively chaos of Rowena's black household is drawn in laughably broad strokes. Yet you can feel Binder's commitment to the volatile material, best realized in a courtroom scene in which Elliot takes the stand to make a distinction between racism and race awareness. Sadly, Costner's bold performance is lost in a film that settles for seeing things as black or white.



ALL AT SEA Costner sues for custody of granddaughter Estell (top) in *Black or White*. Above: Law's submarine mines Nazi gold in *Black Sea*.

tell). Elliot and his wife had been raising the girl since their daughter, only 17, died giving birth to Eloise.

Now Elliot is determined to go it alone – that is, until Eloise's long-absent, drug-troubled dad, Reggie (André Holland of *The Knick*), shows up. With Reggie's mom, Rowena (the reliably superb Octavia Spencer), ready to back him up in a custody battle, the stage is set for family warfare. And no one is shy about playing the race card.

Writer-director Mike Binder, who worked beautifully with Costner on 2005's *The Upside of Anger*, finds himself on the downside of juggling

Black Sea

Jude Law

Directed by Kevin Macdonald

★★★½

HELL AND HIGH WATER ARE a setup for genre adventure that *Black Sea* only partially delivers. But in Hollywood's slack season, we'll take what we can get. Greed makes a great plot catalyst. And director Kevin Macdonald (*The Last King of Scotland*) uses Dennis Kelly's script to shoe-horn *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* into a submarine. Jude Law, looking grizzled, excels as Robinson, a former sub captain who has spent the past decade doing drudge

work for an ocean salvage company. When the bastards fire him, Robinson leads other downsized mates on what they think is a treasure hunt.

The plan, hatched by money man Daniels (Scoot McNairy), is to salvage gold ingots from a Nazi U-boat on the floor of the Black Sea. The crew of Brits and Russians is joined by Aussie diver Fraser (Ben Mendelsohn), the top nut job in a crew of crazies.

Macdonald uses the *Das Boot*-like claustrophobia for maximum tension, then deadens the thrills with flashbacks to Robinson and his estranged wife. Ah, jeez. Law and the scrappy cast work best when submerged and going at one another like beasts.

Song One

Anne Hathaway

Directed by Kate Barker-Froyland

★★½

FIRST-TIME FILMMAKER Kate Barker-Froyland trusts the silences that occur when two people aren't talking. That's a good thing. What's not so good is when the talk grows enervating. That happens when Franny (Anne Hathaway), studying anthropology in Morocco, returns home to New York to see her brother Henry (Ben Rosenfield), a busker who's been in a coma since a cab hit him. It's Franny's plan to revive Henry by bringing him the sounds and smells that inspired his music. She also befriends and beds James Forester (Johnny Flynn), Henry's rock icon, which seems, well, a little creepy and a lot contrived.

Despite the delicate shadings Hathaway brings to the role, *Song One* moves inexorably from wan to wearying. Hoping to capture the bittersweet vibe of the 2006 cult hit *Once*, Barker-Froyland injects the fragile plot with songs written by the indie-rock duo Jenny and Johnny. Hathaway stares longingly as Flynn sings, but *Once*, I'm afraid, is enough.

ALBUQUERQUE

[Cont. from 49] really are concerned about the violence and the direction we're going in. But if you put it to a vote, I shudder to think how it would be."

Shannon Kennedy, one of the lawyers suing the city over the death of James Boyd, believes any real police reform is going to require changes that extend far beyond the department. "If you don't have a response that's as grand as the evil that's been committed, then what the fuck are you doing?" she asks. "We've been individually suing officers for 20 years. Where are we? It's gotten us nowhere."

On January 9th, the list of people shot by an on-duty Albuquerque police officer grew again. Lt. Greg Brachle was working on a low-level drug bust when he opened fire on a black car parked in a McDonald's lot. This time, though, the fusillade from a policeman's gun didn't hit a criminal, or a homeless person, or someone living with mental illness. Two of the four people in the car were undercover cops on Brachle's own team, and one of them was badly injured and listed in critical condition after multiple surgeries. Just what went wrong in the course of the \$60 drug buy remains unclear, but the incident did little to reassure the people of Albuquerque that their police were turning over a

new leaf of professionalism and restraint in the new year.

Even as this discouraging news story was still unfolding, though, a more promising one emerged. The Monday after the parking-lot shooting, District Attorney Brandenburg announced that she was bringing murder charges against Perez and Sandy in the killing of James Boyd. But the road to bringing the cops to trial might be a rocky one. On October 7th, Brandenburg says, she was in contact with an attorney for the police union to let them know she was leaning toward bringing charges. A week later, the *Albuquerque Journal* filed a public-records request for a previously undisclosed yearlong police investigation into Brandenburg herself, accusing her of bribery and witness intimidation. Brandenburg's son had been accused of petty thievery by his friends and a couple he used to live with, and the police alleged Brandenburg had pressured the victims not to press charges. Strangely, police never interviewed Brandenburg herself. Anonymous sources had tipped off the *Journal* to the investigation long before the report was delivered to the state attorney general.

Inevitably, the investigation had political implications. A top city official cited the probe in a letter to Brandenburg, questioning the objectivity of the DA's office and

suggesting future shootings should be referred to a special prosecutor. Brandenburg denies trying to silence her son's accusers and won't say if she thinks the investigation is being used as leverage against her now. "You can put two and two together," Brandenburg says. "You can speculate on that."

The night after Brandenburg announced the charges, APD officers shot and killed yet another person. But when police and city officials gathered for a briefing, a city lawyer barred the DA's representative from the meeting, saying the DA had a conflict of interest because of the murder charges. Brandenburg's office has argued that the move violates the city's settlement agreement with the Justice Department.

It will be months before a judge hears the case against Perez and Sandy and decides whether there's enough evidence to try them for murder or some lesser charge. For observers in Albuquerque, the stakes couldn't be higher. Mike Gomez, who has helped lead the fight to hold police accountable since his son was killed, says the stark video evidence makes this the best chance to put the brakes on a police force out of control.

"The guy was killed in front of the whole world," he says. "If we can't hold you accountable for this, what can we hold you accountable for? What's it going to take?"



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happy your heart out



INTRODUCING The Cover Wall

Almost every aspect of music and pop culture has changed since our first issue came out, in November 1967, but at least one thing remains the same: Every musician in the world dreams of making the cover of ROLLING STONE. And from Yoko and a naked John to, well, a naked Miley Cyrus, from Annie Leibovitz to David LaChapelle, the covers have always been an art form in their own right – sometimes shocking (Marilyn Manson in snake makeup, Kanye West as Jesus), always iconic (Springsteen and the flag). Here are the stories behind some of the most famous.

John and Yoko's Final Embrace

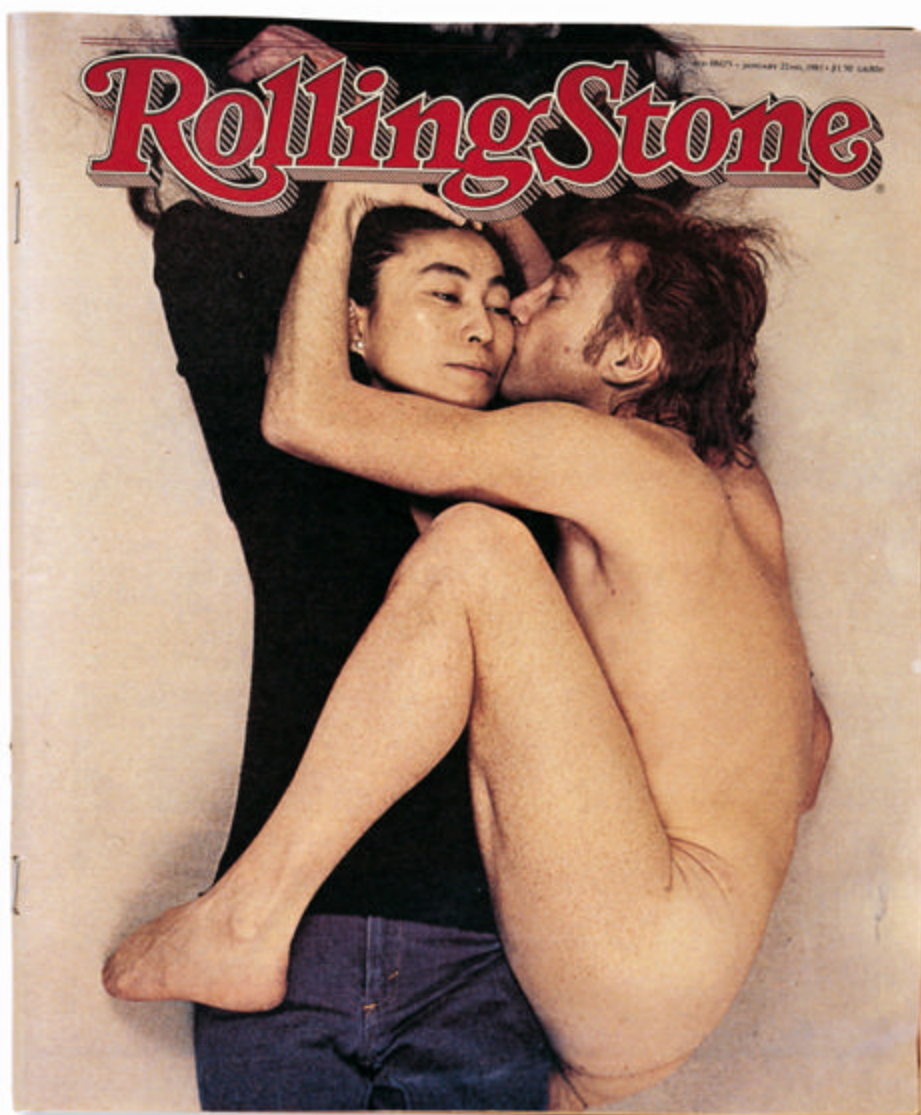
RS 335 Yoko Ono and John Lennon

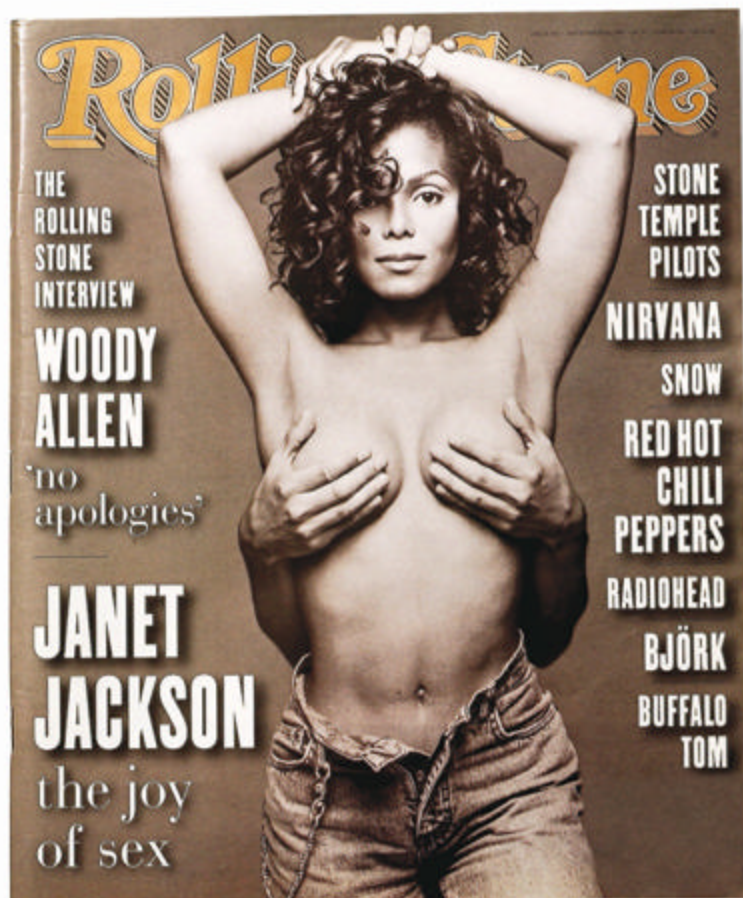
*Photograph by
Annie Leibovitz*

On December 8th, 1980, hours before he was murdered, John Lennon opened his New York apartment to Annie Leibovitz. “He said, ‘I know they want me by myself on the cover,’” recalled the photographer, “‘but I want Yoko to be on the cover with me. It’s really important.’” Knowing the two had a history of posing nude together, Leibovitz asked them to strip down, but Ono felt shy and refused. The day after Lennon’s death, Leibovitz came to the RS office and saw a cover mocked up with a close-up of Lennon’s face: “I said, ‘Jann [Wenner], I promised John that the cover would be him and Yoko.’ And Jann backed me up. It was the last promise.”

DIVE DEEPER

Read full stories from classic issues of ROLLING STONE, dating back to the magazine’s launch in 1967, with our brand-new Cover Wall experience at RollingStone.com/coverwall.





The Joy of Being Janet

RS 665 Janet Jackson Photograph by Patrick Demarchelier

While getting out of the shower during the filming of her 1993 movie, *Poetic Justice*, Jackson saw herself in the mirror with her long braids covering her chest. She liked the image enough to re-create it with Demarchelier, though the hands of then-husband Rene Elizondo took the place of her hair. "Everyone read deeply into it," Jackson later said. "I just thought it was a cool shot."



Madonna Strikes a Pose

RS 508 Madonna Photograph by Herb Ritts

Madonna first met Ritts when he shot the poster for her 1985 comedy, *Desperately Seeking Susan*. "She walked in in her boy-toy mode," Ritts said in 1999. "And we ended up taking pictures right off the bat. We just really clicked." It was the beginning of a long friendship that spanned 29 photo shoots and four ROLLING STONE covers – including this one, which Ritts shot in Tokyo while Madonna was on 1987's *Who's That Girl*

Eminem Comes Out on Top

RS 1118 Eminem

Photograph by Mark Seliger

Eminem was two and a half years sober in 2010, but his demons haunted him on the set. "He was shy," says RS creative director Jodi Peckman. "At some point, he pulled his hood up, and I knew that was the shot."



EXPLORE OUR BACK PAGES

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bounce your heart out





Marilyn's War Paint

RS 752 Marilyn Manson

Photograph by Matt Mahurin

Marilyn Manson showed up at his first ROLLING STONE cover photo shoot with his makeup already done. His new album, *Antichrist Superstar*, was a huge hit, and the Christian right had labeled him public enemy number one; teenagers across the country exchanged (untrue) rumors that Manson had done everything from removing a rib to torturing puppies. "I was obsessed with worms and snakes," he said in 2004, "the idea of being a worm or being engulfed in worms. In that photo, it ended up looking like I was a snake." The shoot itself was quick. "The photographer stood me against the wall, took 10 photos and said, 'That's it,'" remembered Manson. ("I suppose any asshole with a camera can shoot 150 pictures and get a good one," he added.) The January 1997 issue came out on Manson's birthday. "We did listen to the Dr. Hook song 'Cover of the ROLLING STONE,'" said Manson, "and there were drugs snorted off the cover, and there were probably underage girls in the room at the time." He would look back fondly years later: "I felt there was something very tribal and magical about that whole image. That shot is still the most spectacular of any magazine I'd ever been on."



Bono: The Fly Years

RS 651 Bono

Photograph by Andrew Macpherson

Bono posed as the Fly – a cocky alter ego he portrayed onstage – on his third RS cover of the *Achtung Baby* era, in 1993. "There were reports of egomania," Bono told writer Alan Light. "I just decided to become everything they said I was."



MJ's Disney Moment

RS 509

Michael Jackson

Illustration by Anita Kunz

The magazine hired Kunz to turn Jackson into a cartoon character in 1987. "At that time he was such a cartoon figure," she said. "The trick was trying to make a Disney character but still have it look like him."



Pete's Leap Forward

RS 320

Pete Townshend

Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Leibovitz photographed Townshend in the spring of 1980 in a studio that used to host porn-movie shoots. "You could smell the amyl nitrate," said Townshend. "Annie was like a great, overanimated hockey schoolgirl."



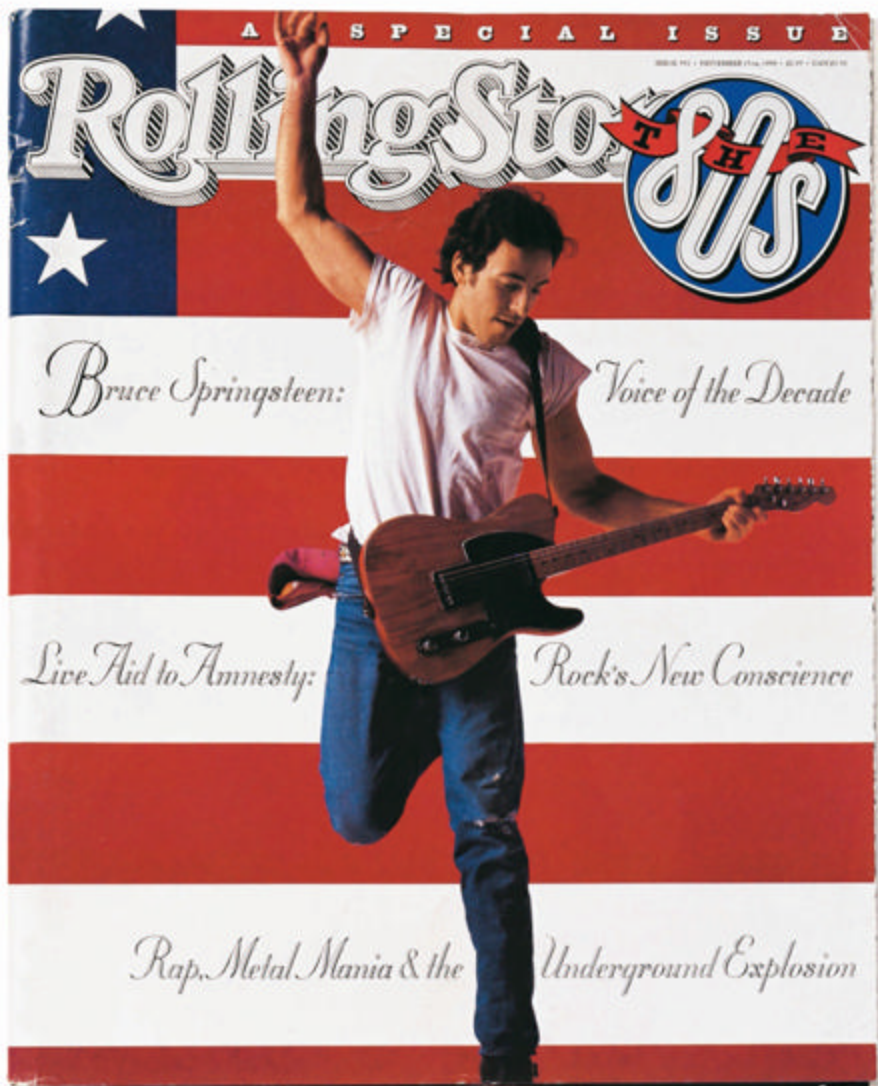
Yeezus Walks

RS 993

Kanye West

Photograph by David LaChapelle

"I wanted it to look like the DVD cover of *The Passion of the Christ*," said LaChapelle of this 2006 shoot, "right down to the individual thorns." The image drew fire from the Catholic League – and even Howard Stern.



Bruce Springsteen: American Idol

RS 591 Bruce Springsteen Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

The 1990s were less than a year old when ROLLING STONE took a look back and named Springsteen the “Voice of the Decade” for the 1980s. “It easily could have been Michael Jackson or Prince or Madonna,” Springsteen said in 2006. “But using me, well, I suppose that’s what I was aiming for. I worked through the decade to find my link in the chain of people not afraid to work through history in their song and dance – whether it was Woody Guthrie or Bob Dylan

or Elvis or James Brown.” For the cover image, the magazine selected an outtake from Leibovitz’s 1984 *Born in the U.S.A.* cover shoot. The American flag background had been Springsteen’s idea. “I was very conscious of being an American musician and addressing the issues of the day,” he said. “There was a sense that the flag was up for grabs, that you had to stake your claim to its meaning and to the kind of country you wanted your kids to grow up in.”



Behind Bob’s Shades

RS 257 Bob Dylan

Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Leibovitz had a brief window of time to snap this 1978 photo of a sunglasses-wearing Dylan before he insisted they take a walk outside near the L.A. photo studio. “He was very reluctant to come in,” she said. “And he was being a bit goofy.”

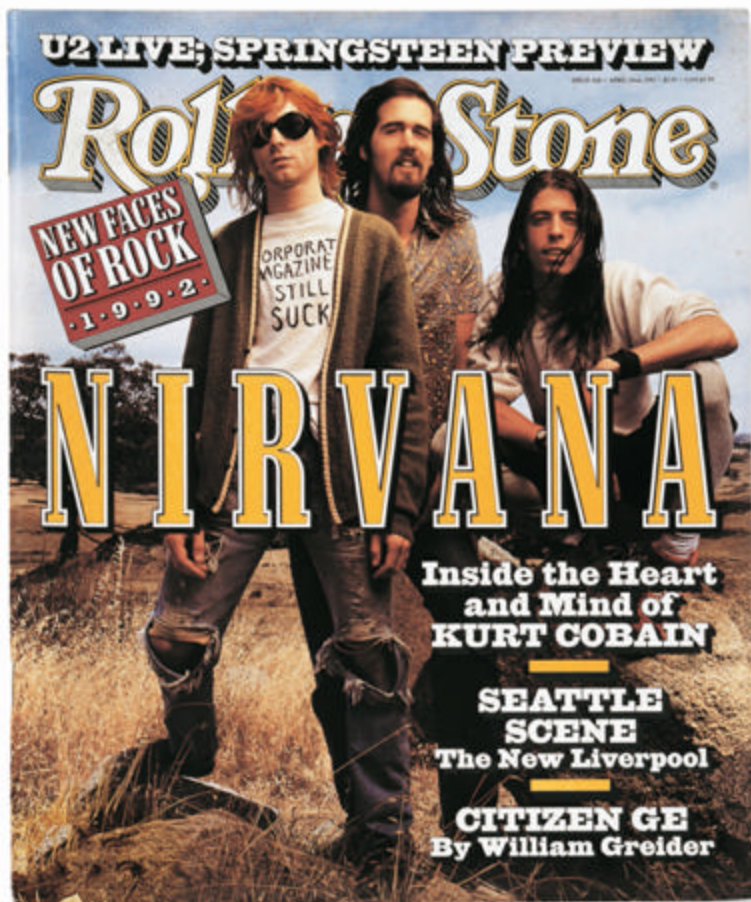


Bette’s Bed of Roses

RS 306 Bette Midler

Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Before Midler could lie down in a bed of roses for her 1979 RS cover, a set assistant had to cut off the thorns from every single stem. Midler looked back very fondly on that era. “I was young,” she said. “My legs were thin. Look at those skinny arms! I wish I had those arms today.”



Nirvana Hit the Top

RS 628 Nirvana Photograph by Mark Seliger

Seliger told Nirvana to “wear whatever you want” to their first ROLLING STONE cover shoot, in 1992. When Kurt Cobain showed up with a homemade “Corporate Magazines Still Suck” T-shirt under his Seattle cardigan, Seliger thought the shoot was doomed. “Of course, everybody loves it,” he recalled in 2006. Instead of censoring Cobain, we sent his joke around the world.

Keith Richards Cleans Up for the Eighties

RS 356 Keith Richards

Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Richards felt this 1981 cover image made him look like a drug addict, but Leibovitz disagreed. “Keith has an extraordinary face,” she said. “It really doesn’t show how ravaged he is, or was, or can be.” The photo was taken in 1979, two years after the guitarist barely escaped prison time for heroin possession. By 1981, Richards was clean, at least by his standards. “He put away a whole bottle of Jack Daniel’s,” recalled Kurt Loder, who interviewed him for the accompanying story. “This appeared to have no effect on him. I emptied a bottle of wine and couldn’t have said the same.”



The Chilis' Chopped-Off Member

RS 633 Red Hot Chili Peppers Photograph by Mark Seliger

Anthony Kiedis succinctly described his feelings when the Red Hot Chili Peppers got their first ROLLING STONE cover: “Bitter.” The source of Kiedis’ anger was that, as the issue was going to press in May 1992, guitarist John Frusciante left the band, and the magazine decided to cut him out of the cover image. “We’d just had our most successful record,” said bassist Flea, referring to their 1991 album *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*. “John was a huge part of that. He deserved

to be there with us, whether he quit or not.” Ironically, Frusciante had been ambivalent about the shoot: “I didn’t think it was a particularly good idea,” he said of Seliger’s suggestion that the band appear naked. “I said, ‘You can just leave me off the cover.’” Eventually, Frusciante agreed to be in the shot, but he wasn’t too hurt to be left off. And he wasn’t the only thing missing. Recalled drummer Chad Smith, “Flea’s bushy pube area looks a little airbrushed.”



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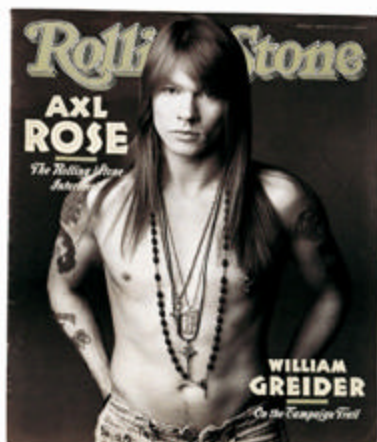
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Bob Stirs It Up

RS 219 Bob Marley Photograph by Annie Leibovitz

Marley was a reluctant interview in 1976 – agreeing to talk to ROLLING STONE only because he felt its presence on college campuses spoke to his audience – so Leibovitz had to go to extreme measures to get the shot. “I staked out his room for two days,” she said. “Finally, he felt sorry for me.”



Rose's Thorny Shoot

RS 627 Axl Rose Photograph by Herb Ritts

Ritts captured a surprisingly vulnerable side to the legendary hard-partying Guns n' Roses frontman in 1991. But when Rose took the stage more than two hours late the next night, he blamed ROLLING STONE – calling for his fans to boycott his band's own cover story.



Purple Reign

RS 429 Prince

Photograph by Richard Avedon

The opening scene of Kurt Loder's 1984 cover story is Prince fleeing the photo shoot – this iconic shot is from a previous Avedon session.



Pop Goes Gaga

RS 1080 Lady Gaga

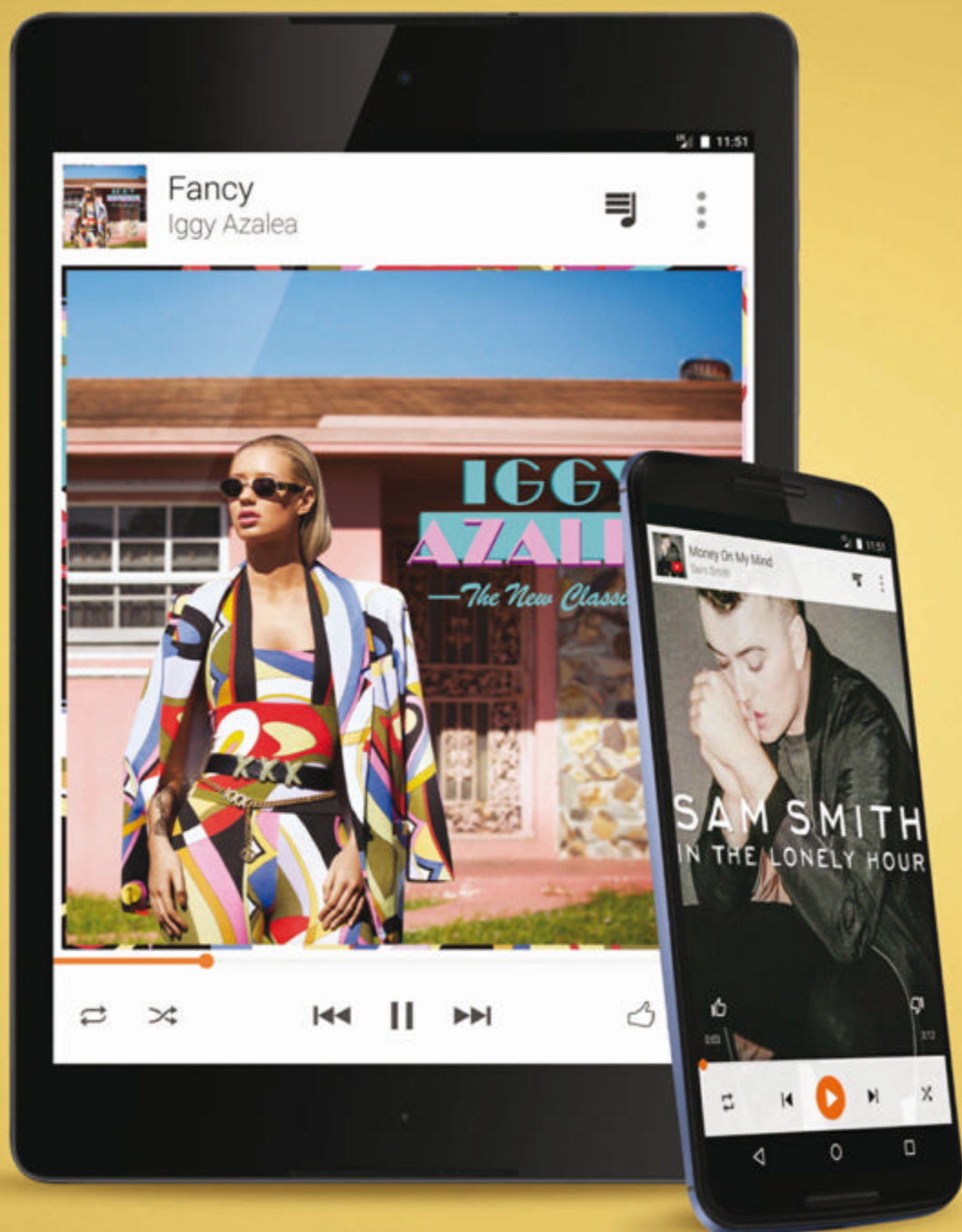
Photograph by David LaChapelle

“I don't look like other pop singers,” said Lady Gaga in her 2009 RS debut. “I look new.”



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